

and suffer death.

BEADLE'S

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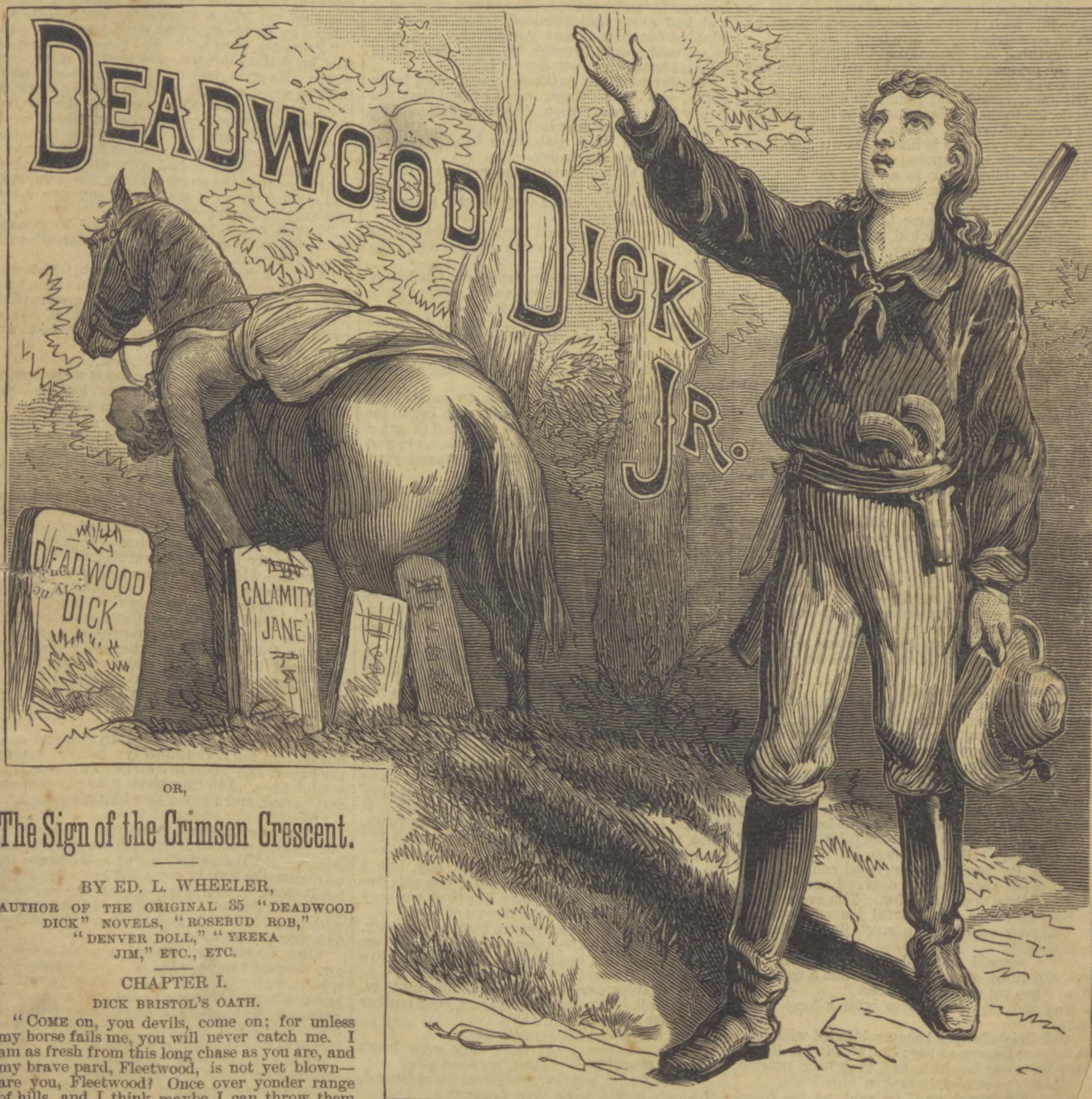
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OR,

The Sign of the Crimson Crescent.

BY ED. L. WHEELER,
AUTHOR OF THE ORIGINAL 35 "DEADWOOD
DICK" NOVELS, "ROSEBUD ROB,"
"DENVER DOLL," "YREKA
JIM," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

DICK BRISTOL'S OATH.

"COME on, you devils, come on; for unless my horse fails me, you will never catch me. I am as fresh from this long chase as you are, and my brave pard, Fleetwood, is not yet blown—are you, Fleetwood? Once over yonder range of hills, and I think maybe I can throw them off my trail!"

"The speaker was a lad of seventeen, or there-

"THE NAME OF DEADWOOD DICK JUNIOR SHALL BECOME AS GREAT A TERROR TO
EVIL-DOERS AS WAS THAT OF THE MAN WHO LIES HERE."

abouts, who, mounted upon a clean-limbed bay horse, was riding like the wind over a stretch of level prairie, to the northward, where, perceptible to vision, a long, low range of foot-hills began, that eventually rolled up, and on, until they resolved themselves into a mighty mountain range.

There was little grass upon the undulating plain over which a fire had lately swept; consequently the hoof-strokes of the horse left a plain trail behind.

The afternoon was over half spent—a luridly hot September afternoon, with little air stirring to counteract the scorching rays upon the barren plain.

Yet, neither horse nor rider appeared to mind the heat, for, to all appearances, they were flying for life and liberty.

Away back to the southward, perhaps five miles distant, a cloud of dust marked the location of a party of pursuers—in which there was nothing so strange, except for one thing; for many an exciting chase had taken place over that very plain before that day.

The exception concerned the fugitive, and the burden he carried, as he sped on, on, sparing not the spur, to reach the range of foot-hills.

Although so young the rider possessed a strong healthy figure, characterized by agility of motion and natural grace of carriage. He sat in his saddle with perfect ease, showing that he was an equestrian by nature born.

Everything in person and act seemed to indicate the presence of remarkable nerve force and decision of character.

His face, round and plump as a school-girl's was decidedly handsome, flushed as it now was, and devoid of beard. His mouth was firm, but pleasing, his eyes of a brilliant brown hue, and very magnetic and expressive.

His hair rolled back in a wavy mass over a finely shaped head, and fell in soft cascades down upon his shoulder.

His attire was a coarse but serviceable coat and pants, the latter tucked into a pair of top-boots; a blue flannel shirt, with broad collar thrown open at the throat, and a jaunty, wide-rim slouch hat.

A belt around his waist, contained a pair of revolvers, while a Winchester repeating-rifle was strapped to his back.

The most peculiar thing about the young fugitive was the burden he bore.

That burden was a woman!

She lay across the saddle in front, her head and shoulders supported by his left arm, while his right hand was used in guiding the sure-footed horse.

It was not a young woman, but an elderly lady, very plainly attired—a lady of five-and-fifty, perhaps, upon whose thin, wan face the hand of trouble had boldly traced many a care-line.

She was not insensible, although her eyes were partly closed as they sped on, and it was evident that the bounds of the horse caused her much pain.

Dick Bristol—for that was the name of the young knight of the saddle—gazed down at the deathly face every few seconds, with an expression of deepest sorrow and anxiety.

Who was this poor, pale creature whom he was so nobly trying to bear beyond the reach of pursuers?

Was she aught to him?

One gazing at the two faces could not easily discover any resemblance between them.

The young fugitive soon set all doubts at rest on this score, however, for, after looking back over his shoulder, he said:

"They're out of sight in an arroyo, now. If I can only get over the range, mother, I am in hopes we can find a spot where you can gain a rest of a few minutes' duration, at least."

"No, no, my child!" was the faint response of the woman. "Do not stop on my account. Keep on, Richard—keep on, until you are safe!"

"It is not that, mother dear. I am safe anywhere. It is you I fear for. You are not able to bear up under this fearful journey—you are in too poor health. We must find a place to rest soon."

"Yes, we will find a place of rest soon," was the still faint answer. "It is but a matter of time when we will all be at rest."

And she closed her eyes with a long-drawn sigh.

Dick Bristol's eyes became blinded with tears as he gazed down at her; but he bit his lips to keep back words which, had they been uttered, would have completely broken him down.

"On, Fleetwood, on!" he said, to the foam-flecked bay. "Do your best, old boy, now, if ver!"

Away and onward they sped, and at last began to ascend the gradual incline of the foot-hills.

Dick Bristol kept an anxious watch of the rear as well as the front, and a knitting of his brows showed that the prospect was not to his liking.

"They're gaining—there's no use of denying that," he mused, "and have been for the last half-hour. They are now less than three miles away, and are hot after me. The sun is yet two hours high, and if something don't turn up in my favor, they will run me down before darkness arrives. I am afraid mother won't hold out much longer, either."

At last he reached the brow of a hill, and a cry of surprise and joy burst from his lips.

Before him lay outspread a panorama of exceeding loveliness, as compared with the barren expanse over which he had been riding for the last several hours, hard pushed by most bitter and merciless enemies.

Before and below him, running at right angles with the course he was pursuing, lay a beautiful valley, green with verdure, and decked here and there with buds of variegated flowers, while a silvery serpentine stream ran through this lovely lane of nature.

The valley was not over half a mile in width, but ran for miles to the eastward and westward, and had every indication of being faultlessly adapted for grazing and agricultural purposes, being untimbered, except for here and there a broad-branching cottonwood tree.

A mile and a half to the eastward was a large cabin, and outbuildings, which proved that the valley had already been selected as a home by some wide-awake party.

Dick Bristol drew rein for a brief moment, then rode down the valley.

"If I go to the ranch yonder, there's where I'll be sought for first!" he mused. "I'll take the western course, and I may be able to outwit the hell-hounds yet!"

When he had reached the valley-bottom, he headed Fleetwood to the left and gave him the spurs.

For perhaps a mile they sped on, until they reached a little turn in the valley, where grew a couple of huge cottonwood trees.

It was at this point that a groan from his mother caused Dick Bristol to suddenly draw rein.

Mrs. Bristol's eyes were closed, and she was breathing in quick respirations.

"Mother! oh! mother, speak to me!" Dick cried, slipping from the saddle with her in his arms, and laying her upon a soft bed of grass 'neath one of the trees. "Oh! mother, are you worse? Has this hard riding overtaken your strength?"

Mrs. Bristol slowly opened her eyes and gazed up into his handsome face, a world of motherly affection expressed in that one steady look.

"No, my child, I am not worse—I am better. Ah! so much better, and I am so thankful! It will soon be over, and then, my poor boy, I will be at rest, never to suffer any more. Oh! you ought not to weep, Richard—you ought to be glad, with me, when you remember how much I have passed through, and what I have suffered!"

"Oh! mother! mother! My God, it cannot be that you are dying?" sobbed Dick, as he knelt beside her, his tears falling upon her pallid, up-turned face.

A sweet smile of contentment lit up her eyes and wreathed her lips.

"Yes, my child, I am dying, so far as this world is concerned, but dying only to live again where there is no sin, no trouble. I have been laying for this hour to come, my son, and I am glad the hour is here. Life has been but a torture in late years, and now that God will release me from all my earthly trouble, I long to go. Of course I have to leave you behind, my precious boy, but I trust, for your poor mother's sake, you will live such a good and exemplary life that we may meet each other before the throne of God."

"Do not weep then, my son, for that is wrong. We are bidden not to mourn the loss of those we love. Weep not, but listen to me, for these lips of mine will soon be closed forever."

"You know something of our family matters, but not all. You know that I am your mother—you are satisfied of that?"

This was asked interrogatively.

"Yes, mother, I am sure. My very heart tells me that!" Dick replied, between sobs.

"And you have always believed Budd Bristol, the man-demon, to be your father?"

"I never knew to the contrary, mother. But when, three years ago, he drove me from home,

in the dead of winter, when you were weak and helpless in bed—then, I had a suspicion that he was not my father—a suspicion that has grown upon me, ever since."

"And, it was right. Your name is Bristol, but you are not Budd Bristol's son. Listen. I must tell you all before I go, or I would not rest easy in my grave."

"Years ago, I married Byron Bristol—your father—and we came West, and settled in Iowa, where we took up land, and by the time you were born, we had a nice farm of three hundred and sixty acres, and were surrounded by many comforts our less economical neighbors deprived themselves of. Finally, Budd Bristol came to live with us, and persuaded Byron to move further west, take up a large ranch, and rent out the Iowa property, Budd offering to supply half the money for the new venture."

"Well, we left Iowa, and went to Nebraska, and took up a very large ranch, and prospered. But, although my husband was hard-working and industrious, he was too big-hearted and hospitable, and took to drinking. It was Budd Bristol, as I afterward learned, who lured him to drink, who encouraged the habit until it became a passion—as it soon did. All my pleading proved of no avail. He drank up what money we had accumulated, and finally, as I learned, mortgaged our Iowa home for all he could get—it was a fraudulent transaction arranged by Budd—and that went for drink, too."

"From the once noble and honorable man he was, he drifted down to the level of a sot, and worse. He grew jealous of his brother's attentions to me—for Budd tried to reform my husband, as I at that time supposed, tho' at the very time, he was secretly pushing him onward to destruction—and Budd also often gave me money, to supply the necessities for the house."

"Things went from bad to worse, and Byron got so low that the worst bums of the town, that had sprung up on a portion of our estate, became my husband's companions."

"Byron came to me, and tried to get me to mortgage the estate—that is, to sign off with him, so he could mortgage his half."

"Owing to the fact that the ranch, which was large, and well stocked, had tripled in value, by a town being located on it, and again quadrupled, by the survey of a railroad through it, Byron could easily have mortgaged our half of it for twenty-five thousand dollars."

"Of course I would not sign off."

"Finally, my husband could get no money or credit from any source. The court had declared him incompetent to manage his affairs, and I was given charge of our part of the estate. Byron became so frenzied for the want of liquor, that, one night, he swore if we did not give him money to git it with he'd murder some one for their money."

"The next morning, a citizen was found murdered and the body plundered, and of course the crime was laid to Byron. He heard of it, came to me, and swore he was innocent; begged for money to fly from the wrath of the Vigilance Committee which was organizing to hang him without delay."

"He pleaded so piteously that I was much affected, for I had not yet lost all my affection for him. I had no ready money at hand, so I went to Budd Bristol and begged a loan. He consented to give it to me, providing I would sign a paper to the effect that, at Byron Bristol's death, I would either marry him, or forfeit all right and title to my husband's estate."

"And you did this?"

"Yes. I loved and pitied Byron, and could not let him fall a victim to lynch law. I signed the paper, and Budd Bristol gave me five thousand dollars. I in turn gave it to my husband, and he fled, and I never saw him afterward."

"Well?"

"A year afterward, when you were but five years old, I read of Byron's death in an Omaha paper, and the description was so accurate that no doubt was left in my mind but what he was really dead. After a period of mourning, I married Budd Bristol. He had always treated me with great kindness, and besides, I felt obliged to honor my promise."

"But I soon found I had married a demon, and the past twelve years of my life have been replete with misery. I need not tell you what I have suffered. Since he drove you away, three years ago, he has beaten and abused me like a dog, and when, a short week ago, I learned where to find you, I fled to you, to die. Before I left him the wretch gave me my death-blow by stabbing me in the breast, because I refused to sign over the property to him, as I have always refused to do. I never told you, because the wound did not bleed externally, and I did not

"I'd suffer death from it. But this flight excitement have aggravated the hurt and I'm filling up with blood inside. I know I only a few moments to live. But, as I said, I am glad to die, for I am weary of life. In my pocket you will find papers that give explicit information than I have been able to give you. At my death you are, of course, my father's only child, sole heir to the half estate which belonged to him and me."

"I'll leave no will?"

"That, too, is in my pocket. Take care not to lose it, or that Budd Bristol does not for he will never cease making an attempt to get possession of your share of the property as he lives. The deeds are in my pocket,

shade of pallor flitted over Mrs. Bristol's face. She seemed not to breathe for a moment; she rallied and spoke, but it was in a husky voice.

"You'll have to be careful, my boy," she said, taking Dick's hand in her own, so thin and albloodless—"you will have to be careful. Budd Bristol finds that I am dead, he will try to get you out of the way. He is a bad man and the men he has with him are no doubt of the same stamp."

"You feel certain that it is Budd Bristol who is after us?"

"Yes. He swore he'd follow me to the ends of the earth but what he'd secure his point. You case both you and I were dead, he would master of the situation, and heir to all the money, but for one thing."

"And that—"

"A discovery I made a couple of days before I left the Niobrara ranch. I chanced to find an old letter from your father, written as five years ago!"

"H! Then he still lives?"

"I think so—I feel certain of it. The letter directed to Budd, and inquired after your father and mine, and requested a loan of fifty dollars, for the purpose of buying a set of minerals. He wrote from New Luck, Nevada, as five years ago, but I want you to try to find him. I—I—there—it's—death—it's—"

"The speech was interrupted by a hemlock, which poured from her mouth, and the rattle sounded in her throat. At a moment her spirit had returned to the All-Giver."

"For many minutes Dick Bristol knelt beside his dead mother, and sobbed as though his heart would break—wept until he could weep no more; drying his tear-stained face, he set to work to perform the last sad rites, with a sorrowful consciousness born of desperate despair."

"He cleaned away the blood, and raising the body, fastened it to the back of Fleetwood with a strap, then taking the horse by the bit-ring, led the way up the gulch."

"The sun was setting by this time, but he kept on, until he came to four mounds, side by side, evidently graves, not long since made."

"He halted his horse and scrutinized the lettered head of each grave."

"The first bore the name of William Winthrop; the second Iris Winthrop, while the third bore the following inscription:

"CALAMITY JANE."

"BANK WITH FRIENDS, FEARLESS OF FOES." and this is what young Bristol read, with a latest surprise, on the fourth slab:

"HERE LIES

"DEADWOOD DICK,

"LIVE, HONORABLE AND KIND IN PEACE; COOL, DARING AND FEARLESS IN WAR."

"So, Deadwood Dick is dead, eh?" he mused, and this is his grave? I have often heard of him and Calamity Jane, as two restless and daring spirits, friendly to friends but deadly to foes. Deadwood Dick was a dreaded detective, and as able as an avenger of evil and wrong-doing!

"Why should I not be the same? I have a right of vengeance to satisfy, a good old mother's wish to revenge, a father's ruin to repay."

"Yes, Budd Bristol, I will have your evil life and all the bitter moments you have caused my mother, and for the coward's blow that he dealt her!"

"Spirit of my dead mother, I swear it! Here, at the grave of him whose name I will assume, I pledge my life to the task of running you down, Budd Bristol, and swear that the name of Deadwood Dick Junior shall become as great a terror to evil-doers as was that of the man who bore it here. Hear me, oh! ye, who keep the records of vengeance—I raise my hand on high and swear it!"

And the sun sunk behind the great hills, and the birds went twittering homeward through the somber shadows that crept down the mountain-side, like grim and noiseless phantoms.

CHAPTER II.

CALIFORNIA KIT.

A NARROW, but deep and rapid stream of water, known as Reese river, swept majestically down through one of Nevada's deepest and grandest canyons, swirled around a huge bend, formed out of the only level point of land known for miles around, with a sullen roar, and then rushed on to the southward, as if proud of having rounded the offending bend that obstructed its course, with a great noise indicative of its mighty displeasure.

With its source in some of Nevada's famous high spring lakes, it tore madly down through the mountains, from ravine to gorge, and from gorge to canyon, gathering strength and force every few rods of its journey, until, when it passed the bend above referred to, it was a river of no mean size, but so rapid and boisterous that only an expert would have cared to venture out upon it in canoe or skiff.

Beyond the bend it kept on for miles, finally turning directly southward, into a more level country, and forming many a pretty land-locked lake on its way.

The bend we have mentioned, as being the only level spot around its section of the mountainous country, was in reality a bar of sand and rocks, about two feet above the level of the river into which it projected, and comprised about a thousand acres of surface, being shaped somewhat like a diamond, the sides not bounded by river being rimmed by solid rocky mountain walls that ran almost perpendicularly upward to stupendous height.

And, singular as it may seem, upon this bar was a town—a real, live Western "city," of upward of two hundred souls. The only way of reaching the place being by a narrow trail that followed the eastern side of Reese river up and down the canyon's length.

We will call the camp Bummer's Bar, for reasons best known to the writer.

The preponderance of bummers and guzzlers in the town, who would not work as long as they could beg whisky and provender, make the appellation particularly appropriate.

The great towering mountain-walls that formed half of the boundary of the Bar were rich with veins of gold and silver-bearing quartz, and a number of drifts had already been made by different operators, the yield of which had far exceeded the most sanguine expectations.

There was work at good wages for every one who cared to work, but, as usual in every mining-camp, there were a number of drones who never made it a point to earn their living by the sweat of their brow—gamblers, fakirs and bummers, and the other heterogeneous classes of the vagabond species.

Bummer's Bar, besides its log, slab, and canvas habitations, boasted of two barn-like hotels, The Nugget and The States; a couple of combined drinking and gaming saloons; a general store and post office; a dance-hall, where big-footed miners and "49er" women nightly displayed their terpsichorean accomplishments; a smithy; a bank-exchange, an ore-crusher and refining mill, and several establishments of a minor character, including a "washee-washee," run by John Wong, an almond-eyed dandy.

We drop into Bummer's Bar, about two weeks after the events narrated in Chapter I.

We arrive about sundown, by stage, and as the States is the better looking of the two hotels, we put up there.

The stage brings a big load of people to the Bar, and we find the little town can well do without them, for it is already packed with people. And this, before it is yet a yearling camp!

The jocund landlord of the States, Capt. Hooper, informs us, as he gives us his last room, that he shall have to set men to work, to-morrow, to build on another story, and that if the rush don't abate, before long, a committee will have to be created, and charge an admission fee to the camp.

But, let's see what is to be seen, in this new bonanza strike.

Next door to the States was a two-story frame shanty, with a red light over the door, and a canvas sign, on which was printed:

"DUTCH DUFF'S
DAISY SALOON!"

The Saloon had a frontage on the plaza—for all the houses, etc., were built in a semi-circle—of about thirty feet, and was considerably over twice its width, in length.

At one side of the entrance was a bulletin board, on which was pasted a hand-lettered advertisement, which read as follows:

"LOOK! LOOK! GAZE!"

"A TREAT FOR EVERYBODY, TO-NIGHT!"

The Greatest Sensation of the Age!

At an Outlay of Many Hundred Dollars, the Proprietor of the "Daisy," will show the People that he keeps

THE BEST RESORT IN THE WEST!!!

TO-NIGHT! TO-NIGHT!

Admission Free!

GRAND PRIZE FIGHT!

With Hard Gloves, between the local bruiser,

BIG-MOUTH MOSE,

of

BUMMER'S BEND,

and

CALIFORNIA KIT!

The Famous Female Boxer of 'Frisco!

Reserved Seats, \$5.00."

This sign had been posted for two days, and to say the camp had been in a fever of excitement, since it first appeared, would be "drawing it mild," to say the least.

Dutch Duff was an ignorant and uncouth Dutchman, not credited with great smartness; but he had a very "fly" bartender, in the person of Julius Jenks, and Julius it was, who had spent some weeks in arranging for the sensation, with a view to drawing trade away from the rival saloon, which was known as the "Humming Bird."

Big-Mouth Mose was considered the "very baddest" of all the bad men of Bummer's Bar, and there were plenty who were shockingly bad, that's sure.

Mose, however, took whatever "cake" there was to be taken, and the man had yet to come to the Bar, who could "do him up," in any way, shape or manner.

He stood about five feet seven, in his stogy boots, and weighed over two hundred pounds, being large of trunk, broad-shouldered, and possessed of limbs of unusual size and muscular development.

His sledge-hammer fists looked capable of felling an ox.

He had a large, round head, the top part of which was bald and glossy, and a thick, bull neck.

His face was red and fat, with a pug nose, little bead-like eyes and overhanging brows, while his mouth extended almost from ear to ear, and gave him a ludicrous appearance.

He was not naturally of a ruffianly disposition, and was rather inclined to be waggish and create a "circus" at some one else's expense, except when in liquor.

He was an inveterate brag, and really had some cause, for no one had as yet got the best of him.

"Ther idee ov a stripplin' ov a gal a-tryin' ter knock me out!" he said, with a sniff of disgust. "Why, I'll bet a thousan' dollars an' ther red liquor, ther first clip I give her will knock her silly!"

No one took up the offer, for it was well known in camp that he seldom had a thousand cents about him, much less a thousand dollars. And so the people waited anxiously for the eventful night.

California Kit was to arrive on the stage the same night of her appearance at the "Daisy," and when the old iron-clad hearse rolled into the plaza, just before dusk, a big swarm of the camp's denizens crowded about to get a glimpse of the girl prize-fighter from 'Frisco.

One by one the passengers disembarked, but only one female was seen—a tall, angular, old-maidish-looking woman, attired in black, and wearing a green veil tied down over her face—whom the stage-driver directed to the Nugget Hotel.

"That's her—that's her!" yelled some one, and the crowd began to surge toward the lone female as only a curious crowd can do.

The woman gave a startled shriek, took to her heels, and ran for dear life toward the hotel, while the crowd set up a yell and started after her.

And even after she had got safely within the hotel they lingered around it, hoping to have some more sport when she came out to go to the Daisy Saloon.

In the mean time, a person who had got off the stage walked toward the saloon in question—

a dapper, dandy-looking person, scarcely of medium height, attired in a fine black corkscrew suit, with white shirt, collar and tie, and shiny silk hat.

The form was very plump and graceful of contour, and when beneath the light of the saloon it was easy to agree that the stranger was a girl, or else a very pretty and feminine-looking boy, for the face was a vivacious and attractive one, with a sweet little mouth and dancing black eyes, and a wealth of short, curly hair was exposed as she politely tipped her tile on entering the Daisy Saloon.

"Good evenin', fellers!" she saluted, addressing the half-dozen men who were lounging about the bar. "I say, be you goin' to treat?"

The men surveyed the young fop, as he stood twirling his gold-headed cane, with scowls of displeasure.

"No! younker, we ain't goin' to treat!" one of them growled. "Any one as slings on the lugs as you do, wi' yer Sunday togs, stove-pipe hat, gold-headed cane, an' diamonds, orter be able to treat 'emself, an' the crowd, besides!" for the dapper stranger's shirt front fairly blazed with diamonds, and several fine diamond rings were upon the fingers.

"So ye ain't goin' to treat, eh?" queried the stranger.

"No! we ain't!"

"How is it with you, Dutchy?" and the inquirer leveled a wry glance at the expansive Teuton, who presided behind the bar.

"No, you got nodings to drink, vot you don't pay for!" was the reply. "So run right along oud, sonny. Ve don't do some off dot drust pizness, here."

"Don't eh? Now that's kind o' tough. Kinder thought I could hang you up for a drink."

"My young friend, if you are in want of a drink, I'll pay for it!"

The words were uttered in a frank, hearty voice, and a young man who had been sitting at a table, arose, and stepped forward—a dashing-looking fellow, not yet out of his teens, clad in a brown suit, top boots and sombrero—handsome as an Apollo, and as graceful, too.

In fact, no less a person than Dick Bristol, otherwise, Deadwood Dick, Junior.

"Give the girl a drink, bartender!" he added, "and I'll have a cigar."

And he laid a coin down on the counter.

"Der girl?" echoed Dutch Duff, in astonishment.

"The girl?" cried the miners.

"Yes, the girl!" replied Deadwood Dick, Junior.

"Und you vas a girl?" queried Dutch Duff, staring at the young stranger, who evidently was only about sweet sixteen.

"Why, of course, Limburger! What d'ye take me for?" was the pert answer. "What do I look like, anyhow?"

"You vas look like a sissy dude, so help me!"

"But, I ain't, you know! I am a daisy, you bet, and just as fresh and fly as they make 'em."

"Vel you petter nod go to gotten too fresh around here, to-nighd, mine young friend, or some off der poys vill 'salt' you und you not pe quite so fresh, somedimes, all at vonce!"

And the Teuton's sides shook with laughter, at his own fancied wit.

"Is that so?" drawled the girl sport, after a swallow of brandy. "So I don't strike you as being able to fight, eh? Don't look as if I could kill a muskeeter, do I? Well, now, that's 'cause yer don't know me. I'm a tough, I am, an' I come from Toughtown. There's many a chump gits flipped up, on my size. Come, friend,"—to Deadwood Dick, Jr., "let's take a seat, over here."

And the girl led the way to a table in the rear part of the saloon, which was only dimly lit up, as yet.

Deadwood Dick, Jr., followed her, and they became seated on opposite sides of the table.

The light was sufficient for them to take a good look at each other, which they did, before either ventured to speak.

"Say, d'ye know I kind o' like you?" the girl sport finally observed, in a matter-of-fact way.

"Do you? Well, I guess I shall have to return the compliment," Dick replied, with a pleasant smile. "I don't usually take much stock in girl sports, you see, but it rather struck me you were an exception to the usual run of that species."

"So I am, as you'll find out, if you know me long enough. I ain't no hot-house flower, what was brought up in the parlor, to nurse a pug dog, an' play the piano—oh! no! I can shoot,

run, jump, swim, wrestle, and fight, but there ain't no more operry music about me than there is in a hump-backed hen. Say, what's yer name? 'Scuse my freshness, fer askin'—that's jest a way I've got."

"You may call me Carl Clyde!" was the answer.

"But, that is not your real name?"

"Maybe not. I may have another name, or a dozen of 'em, for that matter, but one answers the same purpose as another. What is your name?"

"Kittie Kcnyon."

"What! not California Kit, who is to box with a local tough, known as Big-Mouth Mose?" Dick demanded, in supreme astonishment.

"The very same, you bet! Don't look much like a Sullivan, do I?"

"Indeed, you do not! Why, you will never be able to stand up before this bruiser, Mose. I've seen him, and he is a tough-looking customer—a big brute, I should say."

"He is, eh?"

"Yes. I doubt if I could knock him down, myself, if he was to put his hands behind his back, and let me blaze away at him!"

California Kit laughed, merrily, at this.

"So you ain't much on the knock, I take it?" she said. "That's no bad fault. A person as don't know how to slug is less liable to carry around an eye in mourning than a person who has got a pile of conceit."

"Have you ever boxed, much?"

"Well, I should hum! I knocked out Big Bullock, at Shaefer's Flats, a week ago, for two hundred a side, and did it in two rounds, at that. Oh! I'm a little tough, when it comes to flingin' my fists."

"How old are you?"

"Now, look here; ain't that kind of an impertinent question to ask? Don't you know young ladies don't like to tell their ages? If I was ter tell you I was sweet sixteen, now, mebbe fifteen years from this I'd want to make out I was only eighteen, and you'd be around, somewhere, to give me dead away!"

"Oh! well, I'll take it for granted you are not much over sixteen," Dick smiled. "I wish I could persuade you not to attempt to box with Big-Mouth Mose!"

"You think he will do me, eh?"

"I certainly do!"

"You allow he will spoil this purty phiz of mine."

"He certainly will."

"And you'd hate to see anything like that?" quizzically.

"I surely would!" Dick declared, heartily.

California Kit put out her little white hand—a hand that did not look as if it could strike a blow of sufficient force to knock down a six-year old boy.

"Shake!" she said. "I'm with you, on that pool. I wouldn't like to have my face mashed into a jelly, myself, no more'n you'd like to see it, for I expect to use it to ketch onto a millionaire, one of these days, when Old Monte passes over the range."

"Old Monte? Who is he?"

"Oh! he's my old dad—the worst old bum you ever saw in your life. He hain't no good. You'll see him around here 'fore the evenin's out—a reg'lar walkin' advertisement of Bacchus, the God of Wine, tho' Monte allus takes whisky, when he can get it."

"Ah! I see. You are troubled with an intemperate parent, who forces you to the sort of life you lead, to keep him in money with which to buy whisky!" Dick said, pityingly.

"Troubled? Forced? Well, now, I guess not! Do I look like a fresh young tenderfoot, who could either be troubled or forced! Nixee! The old man he goes et on his own hook, an' so do I. Once in a while I have to loan him a V, but he always pays it back. As fer this feller, Big-Mouth Mose, I'll do him up in no time; unless I am awfully mistaken."

"I hope you will, Miss Kittie, but I am afraid you don't know your man."

"Maybe not, but I know my biz!" with a shrug of the shoulders, "and don't you forget that. Have you got any money to say I don't put him on his back in the first round? If so, I'm right at home, and ready to entertain callers."

And the girl sport drew a roll of bank notes from her pocket and shook them invitingly under the very nose of Deadwood Dick, Jr.

Dick gazed at her a moment in astonishment.

"Do you mean it?" he said.

"You bet. I'm business, every time, and my name is California Kit!"

"Well, I haven't much money, young lady—just an even hundred," Dick said, "but I'll

wager that you don't knock Big-Mouth Mose out in one round, if it bu'sts me!"

"Very well! Keep the money in your pocket, and here is my hundred. You are to be stakeholder. Here also is a sum of money, which I want you to make bets with. You will find plenty of takers, and you can give odds of ten to five that I will win, all bets to be put up in the hands of Julius Jenks, the bartender."

So saying, she deposited the roll of notes in his hands and arose.

"You will excuse me, now," she said, "as I must go for my supper. Do not hesitate, but do as I tell you, and you will find in California Kit a friend worth having!"

Then, with a smile and a wave of her hand, she turned away and passed out of the saloon, leaving Deadwood Dick, Jr., in a very puzzled frame of mind.

"Well, here's a go," he mused. "My first night in Bummer's Bar promises to be an interesting one. Can it be that I am to duplicate the adventures of my predecessor, the original Richard of Deadwood? Verily, it would seem so. And what strange fate, I wonder, has thrown me in contact with this beautiful girl sport, California Kit? Only time can answer that question, I fancy!"

CHAPTER III.

MRS. HYATT'S VISITOR.

OF the several mines or drifts in Bummer's Bar, that known as the *Lucille* was somewhat the most productive, and, consequently, the richest.

It employed more hands than the others, and paid better wages, for the individual owner, Mr. David Hyatt, was a liberal gentleman, and did not believe in forcing his employees to work at starvation prices, that he might add an additional and extra golden lining to his coffers.

He argued that well paid laborers felt more called upon to do an honest day's work than those who were cut down to the lowest figures, and it was this motto that gave him universal popularity in the camp.

Mr. Hyatt was a fine-looking man, in the prime of life, and his prosperity never made him in the least conceited or domineering.

He was wont to mingle among the "boys" freely, and not one of them could say there was anything mean or stingy about him.

He lived in one of the best-furnished and appointed shanties on the Bar, and was married, but had no children.

He had been married some three years previous to our story, to an Omaha lady, and had brought her with him to Bummer's Bar.

Mrs. Hyatt was a beautiful blonde, aged about thirty, and those who knew her well enough to speak to her, agreed that she was a charming lady, well educated, refined and sociable.

She was noted at the Bar for the elegance of her toilets, all of which were imported from the East, and when she was seen about the camp, which was seldom, the miners raised their hats in profound respect as she passed by.

One evening, less than a week after the arrival of California Kit and Deadwood Dick, Jr., at Bummer's Bar, Mrs. Hyatt sat alone in the front room of the Hyatt shanty, reading at a table, on which burned a brilliant lamp.

The front room was used as a parlor, and was very prettily furnished.

Mrs. Hyatt was attired in a handsome wrapper, and her wealth of sunny hair was so becomingly arranged as to give a most pleasing effect to her fair face.

Mr. Hyatt was out for the evening, and so there was no way to pass the time but to pore over the pages of a novel that lay before her.

So interested was she in the book, that she did not hear a knock upon the door until it was repeated a second time.

Then she started quickly to her feet.

"I wonder who it can be?" she said, half aloud. "Some one to see David, no doubt."

She went to the door, unlocked and opened it. Outside she could discern the outlines of a man's figure, but that was about all, for the night was intensely dark, the sky being overcast with black clouds.

"Does Mr. Hyatt reside here?" a deep base voice inquired.

"He does, sir."

"And are you Mrs. Hyatt?"

"I am."

At this the man stepped forward, and pushed past her into the room, saying:

"I would speak with you a moment, madam."

And without further ceremony, he seated himself in a cushioned arm-chair.

Mrs. Hyatt closed the door, and turned upon the intruder indignantly.

"Sir!" she cried, "I do not know you. How dare you intrude upon my privacy?"

"Because I dare!" was the cool reply, and the man laughed tantalizingly.

He was of powerful physique—broad-shouldered and strong-limbed, and could have posed well for a Hercules.

In face he was not exactly handsome, but ordinarily good-looking. His features were bold in cast, his eyes black and piercing, and forehead broad.

His hair, once black and curling, was mixed with gray freely, and he wore a heavy but gracefully trained mustache of deepest black.

His attire consisted of a serviceable business suit and soft felt hat, and there was nothing particularly flashy or sportish about his appearance.

"So you don't know me, eh?" he added.

"I do not!"

"Sure? Take a good look at me. Don't my face remind you of some one you once knew?"

"I never saw you, sir. You are an intruder, and if you do not leave at once I'll scream for help!"

"No you won't!"

His coolness nettled her.

"Why won't I?"

"Because you dassent!"

White with passion and fear, for she now perceived that his hand covered a short bull-dog revolver, Mrs. Hyatt sunk upon a chair.

"Who are you? What do you want?" she gasped.

"Tut! tut! not so fast. One question at a time is sufficient. So you don't know me, eh?"

"Didn't I twice assure you to that effect, sir?"

"Yes! yes! but, you see, you are dead wrong!"

"I will converse no more with you, sir. If you do not leave my presence at once, I will scream for help—"

"If you do, I'll scream too, and we will bring the whole town here, and, madam, your husband—!"

"Paul Potter, you dare!"

Mrs. Hyatt had arisen quickly to her feet, and drawn herself to her fullest height, while a light of fury shone from her blue eyes.

"You dare!" she repeated in a hissing whisper, and her breath came hard and fast.

The stranger laughed quietly.

"Ah! you do know me, eh? I thought so."

"Wretch! what brings you here?"

"I desire to look upon the face that once belonged to me, my dear."

"Bah! Is that all?"

"No, Anna; have you not yet forgiven and forgotten the past? Do you not have some little spark of love in your heart for me?"

Her lips curled scornfully.

"For you!" she replied, sarcastically. "No!"

"Oh! well, you needn't be so sassy about it!"

And Paul Potter crossed his right leg over his left knee, laid his hat beside his chair, and proceeded to light a cigar, as much as to signify that he intended to stay awhile.

"No! no! don't be so sassy about it, Anna," he went on coolly. "It won't pay you."

"What do you mean?"

"Precisely what I say."

"Or, in other words, you intimate a threat?"

He smiled significantly.

"Hardly, my dear—hardly. When I threaten a person I generally come out, point-blank."

Mrs. Hyatt paced to and fro across the room, her face and eyes only too plainly expressing her hatred for this man.

"I wish you were dead!" she hissed—"do you hear, I wish you were dead!"

"I haven't the slightest doubt of that, my dear. You used to wish that, twelve and thirteen years ago, and really your wishing powers must have increased in strength, since then. It sounds like old times—"

"Stop!" she cried, stamping her slippered foot on the floor. "Do not anger me further, or I'll—"

"What?"

She did not answer him, at once, and his same old sarcastic laugh broke forth.

"Well, it's too bad about you, Anna," he said.

"You ought to have gone into a convent to become an angel, when you were born. By the way, how do you like Hyatt, for a change? I suppose he makes a more model husband than I did eh?"

"He is a very king of men!" she cried, passionately.

"Indeed! Kind of a soft-shelled old turtle, eh?"

"No! he's not! He is a man!"

"Then, Heaven only knows how you manage to get along with him. You like him better than you did me?"

"If I didn't I'd kill him. I worship the very ground he walks on!"

Paul Potter gave vent to a long-drawn whistle.

"Well, now, really, that's a comforting assurance to give me!" he said, grimly. "However, I'm somewhat stuck on your frankness, I'll swear! But, I'll be dashed if I can understand how you can like an old fossil like Hyatt, in preference to an able-bodied man like me."

"He is not an old fossil!" Mrs. Hyatt cried, walking close to him, and shaking her fist in his face. "He is an honorable, upright gentleman!"

"And, he's got an honorable, upright wife!" sneered Potter, "or, rather, he's got some one else's wife, which is all the same, as long as he don't know it!"

"Curse you, Paul Potter—curse you! Do you dare to say I am not lawfully his wife?"

"That's about the size of it, Anna, dear!"

"You lie, you villain, you lie!"

"You shouldn't say that, Anna, for you know you are in error. You know, or at least you have no doubt heard, that I was brought up under a Washingtonian code, and that I always followed the example set by the illustrious George. Sit down, dearest, sit down! I am not an artist, or a sculptor, and consequently your dramatic posing in front of me is without effect. Sit down!"

"I will not sit down. I hate you, Paul Potter, for I know you have come here to try to break up my happy home."

"Listen to me! Fourteen years ago, to-night, when I was but a child, I married you."

"Correct. You retain dates in memory, quite well."

"I was then only seventeen years of age. I married you because, as I thought then, I loved you. But, before a year had passed, I was conscious that I had made a mistake—a bitter, bitter, bitter mistake. However, I resolved to keep my secret, and make you as good a wife as I could. We were poor, and yet I did all I could to make you happy. But, all to no use. You evidently knew that my efforts cost me pain. You took to drink, and we quarreled, almost every day of our lives. At last, after our baby was born, you left me—deserted me, did you not?"

"I did, Anna, because, as I told you, I knew we were ill-matched. I loved you, but my love was not returned, and I knew our lives would be only one turmoil of unhappiness did we live them out together. So I told you to go your way and I'd go mine, but that you must never marry."

"And what did you do? Stop! do not interrupt me, for I propose to finish the story you have begun."

"After you left me you put our child in a home, and there it died. You did not even go to see it after it was dead. I did, and prayed over its little body, and thanked God that He had taken it!"

Mrs. Hyatt staggered to a seat, and buried her pallid face in her hands.

Paul Potter went on, his tone no longer betraying the malice that had characterized his previous remarks:

"The next I heard of you, you had joined a strolling theatrical party to play small parts; but, making a failure in this line, you joined a ballet troupe. I managed to keep track of you, and made no effort to screen my whereabouts. You finally got dismissed from this troupe, and was once more 'on your uppers.' Then what did you do?"

"You had me arrested and hauled into court on the charge of desertion! I refused to support you, and got nine months in prison, where my associates were such estimable gentlemen as murderers, thieves and hardened wretches of every sort. Oh, it was nice—fine!"

"When I came out I was pretty well versed in all the criminal sciences, and what honorable sentiments I had when I went in had nearly given me the go-by."

"Years passed by, and I was searching for you, but without much success, until I succeeded in locating you in Omaha about three years ago. My search and researches, however, had made me another discovery."

Mrs. Hyatt looked up with a quick start.

"What?" she demanded, a tigerish gleam entering her eyes.

"Oh, nothing much—only that you had been married before I married you, and had put your child in a county poor-house, where it remained a number of years. Then it was bound out, but

fled the country, and was never heard of after. That's all."

The mine-owner's wife drew a breath of evident relief at this.

"After I found you were in Omaha I did not take the trouble to visit you, but being well-fixed for cash, I put a detective on the case."

"A detective, sir?"

"Yes. I found out that David Hyatt was doing the gallant toward you, and I wanted to discover whether you had any right to receive his attentions or not."

"You villain!"

"No? Why, I thought I was doing a most clever and charitable act! Anyhow, the detective set to work, and traced you back, inch by inch, as it were, occasionally unearthing some suggestive point in your life, until he had traced you down to the day I was juggled. He then made oath to his report, and submitted it to me. I then had the proof that you had not got a divorce from me, nor have you since got one; and so you are not the lawful Mrs. David Hyatt, but instead, are the lawful Mrs. Paul Potter!"

The visitor then leaned back in his chair and indulged in a seemingly hearty laugh.

As for Mrs. Hyatt, she sat upon her chair, and fairly shook, her passion was so intense.

"Well?" she hissed, interrogatively.

"Well," Potter went on, "knowing you were here, and happening to be in town, I thought I'd drop in and see if you had not got about tired of Hyatt, and would be willing to try your former spouse for awhile!"

"No! you wretch! I can never be anything to you, again!"

"You can't, eh?"

"Never—never!"

"Well, I'm sorry about that. Goin' to freeze onto Hyatt till he pegs out, eh? Well, maybe that's all right. When he is dead, you will be well heeled. That will be time enough for me, too. Wonder what the old man would say if he was to catch me here? Ha! ha! ha!"

"For God's sake, Paul Potter, go at once, before you are discovered! Do not come here again. If it's money you want send a messenger, but do not be seen here, again!"

"I don't know about that," Potter retorted. "I'm goin' to try and get acquainted with this husband-in-law of mine. Perhaps I can work him."

Then, the villain arose, put on his hat, and walked toward the door.

Mrs. Hyatt followed him, so as to shut and fasten it.

Just before he reached the door, he wheeled suddenly, caught her to his breast, and imprinted one burning kiss after another, upon her face.

And at this juncture, the door opened, and David Hyatt walked into the door!

Two days later, Paul Potter was to be seen acting as superintendent of the Lucille mine!

What did it mean?

CHAPTER IV.

THE RACKET AT THE DAISY.

THE prize-fight between Big Mouth Mose and California Kit, was to take place at ten o'clock, and The Daisy Saloon began to fill up rapidly, shortly after the girl from 'Frisco had started for her supper, with the roughest element of the camp.

Likewise, this roughest element began to fill up, too, on the bad bug-juice which was dispensed over Dutch Duff's bar, at twenty-five cents a drink.

Both Dutch Duff and his sleek bartender, Julius, were kept busy waiting on these numerous patrons, while a burly miner, whose belt bristled with revolvers, had charge of the sale of reserved seats.

These seats were planks mounted upon transverse stringers, about a foot-and-a-half apart, and for the privilege of sitting-room upon any one of these planks, a charge of five dollars was made.

Those who had not the requisite V, were notified that they would have to run their chances of seeing the fun, from the rear of the aforesaid seats.

In front of the seats was a stage, about eight by ten feet in size, and it was roped off in regular ring style, ready for business.

As soon as the saloon began to fill up, Deadwood Dick made up his mind that it was time to commence business operations. He had been commissioned to speculate for his new acquaintance, and he was really so taken up with her that he made up his mind to do what he could to swell her profits.

He had mingled but little in the society of the opposite sex of his own age, and therefore it was but natural that he should take a decided liking for this dashing little tough, who had freely declared that she rather liked him.

He had serious misgivings, however, as to what would be the result of the set-to.

It did not seem possible to him that the little Californian could stand up for a moment, before such a heavy weight as Big-Mouth Mose, who, report said, had vanquished the best men who ever set foot in Bummer's Bar.

"There's one thing, anyhow," Dick muttered. "The giant sha'n't bruise her badly, if I have to interfere, and run the risk o' gettin' telescoped myself."

After mingling among the crowd for a while, and listening to the expressions of the miners and roughs, he concluded that he would have no difficulty in picking up bets.

Everybody who had any money was willing to bet that Mose would knock out the "gal from Frisco" in one round.

So, slipping from the saloon, Dick entered the States Hotel and went to his room.

Here he sat down and carefully counted over the roll of bills California Kit had given him.

Much to his surprise he found that he was the possessor of twelve hundred dollars, besides the two hundred wager in his pocket.

Returning to the Daisy Saloon, he found it packed fuller than before, and Big-Mouth Mose was elbowing his way about, with a roll of bills in his upraised fist.

"Hyer I am, ther boss slugger o' Bummer's Bar, ready ter bet big odds I knock out ther 'Frisco gal in one round!" he roared. "Who wants ter come an' see me?—whar's ther galoot? A hundred to twenty-five that I knock the gal silly."

Spying an upturned whisky barrel, that had not yet been occupied, Deadwood Dick, Jr., was on it in a jiffy.

"Here you go, my friend," he cried. "I'm ready to take a few bets like that and put up the money in the hands of any responsible man in the town."

"Hooray! you're my huckleberry then, young feller! What's yer name, an' what's yer pile?"

"My name is Carl Clyde, and I'll go five hundred on the girl from Frisco at the odds you offer!"

"What! five hundred! That's two thousand ag'in' your five hundred?"

"You bet!"

"I ain't got but a thousand!" growled Mose.

"Hi! boys, who'll lend me another thousand?"

"I will!" cried a voice, and Paul Potter, the new superintendent of the Lucille mine, pushed forward. "I'll back you for a thousand providin' the money is put up in the hands of David Hyatt!"

"What d'yer say?" roared Big-Mouth, glaring at Dick. "Aire ye goin' ter flunk?"

"Nary a flunk," was the reply. "We don't do business in that way. Let Mr. Hyatt step this way."

The mine-owner, gentleman of culture though he was, always took a live interest in sporting matters, and was invariably chosen referee when there was any dispute or contest to be decided.

Of course Deadwood Dick, Jr., knew nothing about him, but when he stepped forward Dick saw that he was a person who could be trusted.

So the twenty-five hundred dollars were posted in Mr. Hyatt's hands.

This somewhat silenced Big-Mouth Mose, for he had no more money to wager.

Dick still retained his position on the barrel, and held the balance of Kit's money in his grasp.

"Recollect, gents, here is your chance to make or to break!" he cried. "I've got a few hundred left, and I want to see it all put up before the fun begins. Right here's your mutton, and if you don't believe it, all you've got to do is come and smell of it."

"Seven hundred 'cold bones' have I got here to bet that the little beauty from the Golden Gate don't get knocked out o' time by your colossus o' Bummer's Bar. Is there any galoot that's got a spare hundred about his duds?"

There was no response.

The miners who had money had nearly all made small bets among themselves.

And, too, the willingness of Dick to wager so freely upon the girl held the gamblers and others in check.

None of them had yet seen the girl sport, to their knowledge, and were not eager to risk too large sums on an uncertainty.

California Kit might be a modern Hercules, for all they knew.

"Hurrah! here's yer chance!" shouted Dick. "Won't some one come and see me? Remember, I don't want no odds hereafter. An even bet that California Kit knocks Big Mose out o' time! Walk up, now—where's the takers? Any sum from seven cents to seven hundred dollars!"

"I'll take your full limit, even!" cried a voice, and a man, evidently a stranger in the camp, pushed forward.

He was below medium hight, and so bewhiskered that only his eyes and nose were visible as parts of his face.

An old slouch hat was crammed down upon his head, and he was enveloped in a huge overcoat that reached to his boot-tops.

He carried a rawhide bull-whip in one hand, and had the appearance of a man who had just emigrated from some frigid climate.

"Yas, I'll go ye, young feller, you bet!" he cried. "My name is Bill Corney, *alias* Frozen Bill, an' ef I should git a chill while I am in this shebang jest dose me up good with whisky an' I'll be all right. Ef ye don't I'm liable ter shake the roof off the house. Caught the ager from handlin' a rebel's cold feet durin' the war, an' had it ever since. How much money d'ye say ye hev, younker?"

"Seven hundred cold bones!"

"Cold bones?"

"Yes—seven hundred dollars."

"Why didn't ye say so? Put your money up, me boy, an' I'll shiver me shirt off ef I don't jump it."

"Right you are! Here's my money, Mr. Hyatt!"

"Yas, an' heer's my money, boss!"

The mine-owner received the stakes, and, after counting the money over, announced it to be all right.

By this time the crowd began to grow impatient at the nonappearance of the girl from Frisco, and Julius was dispatched to hunt her up.

At the bar Big-Mouth Mose was putting down glass after glass of whisky—"nerve tonics," as he called them.

"Oh! I'll paralyze her!" he cried grimly. "I'll do her in one bout!"

"See here!" said David Hyatt, stepping forward. "Is this fight for a purse of money or for points?"

"It's for points, I reckon," allowed Mose. "Et was old Duff, hyer, who got up the funeral, an' he ain't said nothin' 'bout no purse."

"No! no! Der vas no bursel!" declared Duff. "Dese beoples fight yust for der fun of id."

"Indeed! Does this girl come all the way from California, just for the fun of fighting Big-Mouth Mose?" demanded Mr. Hyatt.

"Vel, no. Mine partender, Julius, he git her to come. If she lick Mose, she get fifty dollars. Julius says she vas a goot veller mit der gloves."

"And supposing she don't lick Mose?"

"Den, she git noddings!"

"This is shameful!" cried Hyatt. "The girl has evidently been brought here under false pretenses. Whether she can fight or not she shall not go away empty-handed. I'll put up a purse of a hundred dollars. The winner takes it."

"Den, Misder Hyatt, since you vas so liberal, I vill do yoost like you, an' ve vill make id *sweet* hundred, yust to make der thing exciting, you know."

The crowd cheered at this, and Big-Mouth Mose looked greatly pleased, for he felt sure he would win, and be money in pocket.

The crowd now began to whistle and clap hands, and for several minutes there was a small-sized pandemonium.

Then, there was a wild, ear-splitting yell as California Kit stepped upon the stage.

There was a curtained dressing-room, on either side of the stage, and she had appeared from one of these, having gained entrance to it by a rear door of the saloon.

Julius Jenks followed her upon the stage.

"Gentlemen!" he said, when he could make himself heard. "I have the honor of presenting to your notice, Miss California Kit, the champion girl boxer of San Francisco, aged only sixteen years, and the winner of over one dozen glove contests, having been defeated—never!"

A terrific yell went up, and the din of applause that followed, was deafening.

It was several minutes ere order could be restored.

Then, Julius went on:

"Miss Kittie will spar, this evening, five rounds, Marquis of Queensberry rules, with Big-Mouth Mose, and will appear as you now see her, using one ounce hard gloves. Prior to her

set-to with Mr. Moses, and while he is getting ready, she would like to have a friendly 'bout with some one of those present, to-night—it don't matter who it is—with soft gloves, jest to get her hand in. Will some one volunteer?"

A grim silence reigned.

Not one in the room made answer.

"This is strange!" Julius said. "Are all you burly miners afraid of this chit of a child? Shame on you! Miss Kit, do you see any one in the audience you would like to have a 'bout with?"

"Yes," was the reply, quickly, "that gentleman over yonder, first, and then, that one!"

She pointed first to Deadwood Dick, Jr., and then to the paunchy proprietor of the Daisy—Dutch Duff.

CHAPTER V.

FUN AND SCIENCE.

THE surprise of Deadwood Dick can better be imagined than described, when he found himself singled out to be made a laughing stock of at the hands of pretty Kittie Kenyon.

He knew literally nothing about the scientific points of the manly art, although he had had fights quite frequently during his boyhood days with lads of his own size.

California Kit's choice was hailed with a shout of delight by the rough audience, and all eyes were turned upon Dick, Jr., as being the first man chosen to face the little beauty.

Aside from the fact that she had put away her high hat, Kit's appearance was unchanged from what it had been an hour before, and it was evident that it was her intention to engage in the ring combat in the costume she wore.

Dick flushed scarlet as she pointed to him, and quickly turned his head in the direction her finger pointed, pretending that he thought she meant some one else.

"Oh, I mean you, Mr. Clyde!" she called out. "You need not be afraid, nor pretend you don't know who I mean, for that won't work! I won't hurt you—so come along!"

"Yes, Mr. Clyde, you cannot well refuse!" added Julius. "This is to be only a friendly bout, you know."

Dick well knew he must acquiesce. Should he refuse to stand up before the girl from Frisco, he would be branded a coward, which was something foreign to his nature.

"All right!" he sung out, and getting down off the barrel, he pushed his way through the crowd and got upon the stage.

"Take off your coat!" Kit laughingly advised. "You can do nothing with that on."

"Why don't you take yours off, then?"

"Oh, I don't have to, you see. I can fight just as well with it on."

Two pairs of soft boxing-gloves were handed out from one of the dressing-rooms, and Kit assisted Dick to put his on.

A merry twinkle in her mischievous eyes warned the young Avenger that she was calculating to have some ripe sport with him.

"I'll make her work for what fun she gets anyhow. I'll stand a little thumping just for the sake of the fun there'll be when she gets hold of the Dutchman."

After Dick's gloves were on, Kit put on her own, and the two faced each other.

Julius was to act as master of ceremonies.

"Now, then, pitch in!" Kit said, in a low tone, and with a smile. "When you see a chance, let me have for all you are worth, and if you succeed in knocking me down, I'll give you half of to-night's profits."

They then began to spar, Dick cautiously, and his opponent carelessly.

Yet, despite her evident carelessness, Kit managed to keep him from hitting her, while, every few seconds, she would give a tap on the face—not hard, but just enough to tantalize him.

Finally, when he was least expecting it, she got in a blow on his forehead with force enough to knock him clean off his feet, and he sat down on the floor of the stage with a thump that jarred the platform.

A wild chorus of yells and thunderous applause went up from the audience.

When time was called, Dick was on his feet again, if anything cooler than when he had begun, a handsome glow upon his cheeks.

"Try it over and see if you can do it again," he said, good-naturedly. "I reckon I must have been going to sleep."

"If so, I evidently awakened you!" Kit laughed.

They went to sparring with more vim, and Dick, Jr., showed more science than he had in the first round, and, by a well-planted blow,

knocked Kit clean over against the ropes, and she went down!

Dick fancied she went down on purpose, but was not certain.

The third and last round was a "dazer" for Dick, for the first blow the girl from 'Frisco aimed at him caught him under the side of the jaw, lifted him clear from the floor, and landed him upon his back.

He quickly regained his feet, only to receive another behind the ear that sent him down, and this time he made no effort to rise.

"That's enough," he said. "I'm no hog."

The crowd cheered lustily, and old men and young vied with each other in seeing which could yell the loudest.

Coins, nuggets and pouches of gold-dust were hurled upon the stage by excited and enthusiastic miners, in a way that reminded one of the halcyon days of '49 in California, and again, later on, when Pike's Peak was the gold-seeker's Mecca.

Deadwood Dick, Jr., made his bow, and retired from the stage with much better grace than could have been expected under the circumstances.

"Dutch Duff will now put on the gloves," announced Julius, after he had gathered up California Kit's presents.

"You're a liar!" shouted Duff, from the bar. "I don't vas put on no gloves vor nopody."

"Oh, yes, you will!" replied Julius, who was anxious to see his employer get punched. "You can't back out, and you the boss of the house, in the bargain! Oh, no! You've got to box with California Kit."

"Nix! Not vor Shoseph!" expostulated Duff. "I vas no brize-fighter, und I know noddings apout dot peesness. You will have to excuse me."

"What d'ye say, boys?" demanded Julius of the crowd. "Shall we excuse him?"

"No, no; make him fight!"

"He's got to fight!"

"If he don't fight we'll buy our lick at the Horned Ace saloon!"

"Hurrah! Yes, that's the ticket!"

"You bet! We'll tear this ranch ter pieces ef Duff don't box wi' California Kit!"

Such, and cries of similar import, went up on every hand, much to Duff's alarm and indignation.

"Dis vas an oudrage!" he cried, excitedly. "I dells you, shendlemen, I don't vas know how to box. I can't box. I von't box!"

"Lookee heer, Dutchy!" bellowed Big-Mouth Mose, swaggering up to the bar with a ruffianly leer, he having divested himself of all his clothing but a sleeveless undershirt and his trowsers. "Ye know me?"

"Vel, I should smile a couple of dimes!" responded Duff. "I vas know you vor swei dollar visky bill!"

"You're a liar! Now, lookee heer, old sour-kroot barrel, you jest go up there an' spar wid der gal, or I'll climb over this bar an' chaw yer left ear off! D'ye heer?"

"Yaw! I vas not deaf like a plind man!" nervously assented Duff, who was in mortal terror of the Bummer's Bar slugger.

"I subbose if I must, I must, but id vas von oudrage against a private citizen, und if I got kilt, you mark my vord, I haff you all arrested for murdter int der virst degrees."

The crowd cheered, vociferously, as Duff waddled forward, fuming with rage, and climbed into the ring.

"Oh! laugh! sthomp! shump all you blease!" he cried. "I don't care. Id don't make me mad. I don't vas care off you laugh your headts off mit your necks! I pet der vas none of you would like to be in my blace, yoost der same."

This only served to make the spectators roar the louder, of course, and the excitement grew intense.

Everybody was on the *qui vive* to see the girl from 'Frisco give the Dutchman a good drubbing.

"Take it cool, Dutchy, and don't get excited!" laughed Kit, as she adjusted the gloves to Duff's fat hands. "I won't kill you but a couple of times, in the first five minutes, seeing it's you, and you set 'em up so freely, when I asked for a drink, to-night! you remember."

Duff groaned, inwardly.

"You won't kill me only swei times, eh?"

"No more."

"Vel, off you strike me vonce, I vill have you arrested vor salt und baddery. I vill stand no foolishness, vatever, und don't you forgot it."

California Kit finished putting on his gloves, and then put on her own.

"Now, then, Dutchy, square off, and come at

me!" she cried, striking an attitude, "and be sure you strike hard, or you won't hurt me. One! two! three!"

"Ready!" called Julius.

Duff had watched the previous set-to with the greatest interest. He had taken notice of Deadwood Dick Jr.'s tactics of jumping about, and calculated he must do likewise, so he began hopping around in a most comical manner, and swinging his fists through the air, like the fans of a windmill, in rapid motion.

Every once in awhile Kit would get in a neat tap on his nose, that would cause him to give a snort of disgust, but, do his best, he could not get in a telling blow on the girl from 'Frisco.

Finally, when his windmill exertions were beginning to prove laborious, and the perspiration began to ooze from his pores, he paused, his fists clinched tightly, and glared at California Kit with fury expressed in his gaze.

"Pyshimminy, I kill you dis time!" he gritted, whereupon he made a terrific rush at her.

Had they come in contact with each other, she would certainly have been carried off her feet; but, she stepped quickly aside, neatly put out her foot, and tripped him.

The result was as might be supposed.

He went crashing forward upon the platform, face downward, and so great was his velocity, in falling, that he slid clear off the stage, and landed over among the foremost of the spectators.

When he arose, it was at once perceptible that in falling, he had erased the skin from his face in a most shocking manner, and was certainly in a bad predicament.

With howls of pain and rage, he made for behind the bar, midst the yells of the crowd.

And once more the stage became flooded with a shower of money, gold and trinkets, the gifts of the enthusiastic spectators.

"Now, gentlemen, if Mr. Big-Mouth Mose will step forward, I will try to do a little better by him than I did by your Teutonic friend!" California Kit announced, as soon as she could make herself heard.

"Whoop-la! hyer I am!" Big-Mouth cried, pushing his way forward. "You'll find yer hain't got no baby ter fool with *this* time, me darling!"

And it certainly looked so when the local bruiser stepped inside the ropes, and his size was compared with that of the girl from 'Frisco, who appeared but as a child beside him.

"Mr. Hyatt, the referee, will please step nearer to the stage, in order that he may have a more uninterrupted view of this contest!" ordered Julius Jenks.

"The contest shall be awarded according to individual merit!" the mine-owner assured.

"That's all we want!" California Kit declared. "To the victor belongs the spoils."

After a few moments, during which Big Mose perfected some swabbing and rubbing preparations for the battle, the two opponents faced.

Both wore hard gloves now, and there was a look of resolution in the face of the girl from 'Frisco that proved she meant to win if it lay in her power; while the open exhibition of confidence in the manner of Mose indicated that he had no idea of losing.

What bets, if any, had not already been made, were now rapidly laid, giving Mose big odds.

Any sensible person comparing the ill-matched pair, would have deemed it next to arrant recklessness to venture any money on the little maid from 'Frisco.

At the word from Julius Jenks the antagonists came to the scratch, and began sparring.

Big-Mouth's longer reach would have seemed to give him the greater advantage, but he did not use it with any success until after Kit had hit him several light, but clever, taps.

Then he got in a blow that slightly staggered the Californian, but she quickly returned it, and not only one, but another, and another, in regular tattoo succession.

It chanced that, on this particular occasion, the end of Big-Mose's proboscis was ornamented with a very large boil which had not yet arrived at maturity, and was of a fiery hue, and gave the big pugilist a most undignified appearance.

And each of California Kit's blows was aimed with such remarkable precision, that the boil caught the full force of them, causing Big-Mouth Mose to recoil and fairly howl with rage.

The pain must have been excruciating for the moment, for it caused the ruffian's eyes to get decidedly watery.

He was too game to give up, however, and rushed forward with a string of curses, and piled in the sledge-hammer blows in rapid succession, but without any particular effect, for Kit warded them off in a way that showed she

had taken many a careful lesson in the fistic art, or else she was a natural prodigy.

Another shower of taps did she land upon that red nose, and that appendage was becoming swollen to double its usual size, and it was not a small nose in its palmyest moments.

At last the pain of the bruised boil became so severe that the tough forgot many of his defensive tactics, and then California Kit assumed the offensive, and rained in the blows upon him in a way that set the crowd again to yelling with enthusiasm.

Big-Mouth's eyes began to swell shut, and, although he tried his best to fight her off by vengeful and vicious rushes, she was too light on her feet for him, and dodged about so as to avoid his blows, and at the same time took advantage of all his openings.

The audience kept up a din of applause, while the bully of Bummer's Bar swore, in terms more forcible than elegant, at every thump he received.

Finally he got in a stinging blow upon Kit's neck, but she retaliated by giving him a hard one between the eyes with the left, and then followed it with a right-hander back of the ear that had the effect to knock Mose clean off his feet.

He struck the floor with a crash, and did not offer to rise, as he was too dazed.

And he was yet too groggy to stand alone when Julius Jenks called "Time!"

Just at this juncture a stentorian voice called out:

"Thieves! pickpockets! Guard the door, and let no man escape from the saloon. I have been robbed!"

And the speaker was none other than the owner of the Lucille mine—David Hyatt, Esq.

CHAPTER VI.

A MOST UNLUCKY STRIKE.

As may be supposed, there was a sensation within the Daisy saloon.

Although Bummer's Bar was up to the times in nearly all peculiarities of the flash mining-towns, she had not as yet had cause to complain of the visits of either road-agents, burglars, or pickpockets—a thing she felt justly proud of.

This might or might not be altogether owing to the fact that when the town sprung up a Vigilance Committee, had been organized, of which David Hyatt had been made president, and this committee had bound themselves by an oath to visit immediate destruction to all classes of crooked people who ventured to ply their vocations in the camp, with the single exception of legitimate gamblers, who were required to pay a heavy local license.

Gamblers were considered legitimate and enterprising citizens, as long as they ran a square game, and when they did not they were given two hours to quit the town, under penalty of being lynched.

Notices were conspicuously posted along the two approaches to the town warning all evil-doers that death awaited them in the camp, and that if they wished to avoid that peculiar "luxury," they had better take the back trail immediately.

Therefore, David Hyatt's announcement that he had been robbed, created immediate excitement.

"Yes, I've been robbed," he declared, searching through his pockets, "not only of what money I held as stakes, but also my own pocket-book, in which I had a thousand-dollar bill!"

"Maybe you've dropped it?" suggested a miner.

"No, I haven't, for I took care to place the roll of wagered money deep down in my pocket, along side of my wallet, and now you can see for yourself that my pants have been ripped, by some sharp instrument, and the money and book are gone."

It was true enough; a slit had been neatly cut in his pants, commencing at the mouth of the pocket, and running downward some six inches.

Whoever had done the job, evidently understood his business!

"Let no man leave the saloon! It won't take long to find out who the robber is!" cried Hyatt.

"If we get hold of him, we will make an example of him, for others to profit by, or I'm a fabrication. Stand to one side of the room, every mother's son of you!"

There were a pair of revolvers in the mine-owners's hands, and he spoke in a tone calculated to inspire obedience.

"Now, then, I want to know who went through me. If he is among this crowd he might as well step right forth and own up for he will be found out, anyhow, as sure's there's gold in Bummer's Bar. Where is the man, I

say?" and his glance swept over the sea of faces searchingly.

He was a keen judge of character, and could read a face about as well as the sharpest of physiognomists.

But there was no one particular man among the array before him, who looked more guilty than his next neighbor.

"I reckon if the man was sharp enough to steal the money, without your knowing it, he was smart enough to clear out, before the job was discovered," spoke up Deadwood Dick Jr.

"Indeed! One would infer, from your words, that you suspect I had some hand in the disappearance of the money!" Hyatt spoke up, quickly.

"Of course that's what he means!" chimed in Paul Potter, eying Dick, savagely. "If I was you, I wouldn't take such an insult from the young whelp, friend Hyatt."

"Who's a whelp?" Dick quickly demanded. "You are!" was the retort. "I don't like the cut o' yer jib, very well, and et's plain you an' the gal are a pair of sharps, what's standin' in together!"

"That's nothin' to do with the money!" broke in David Hyatt. "The most important thing is to find the man who robbed me. I don't propose to lose a thousand dollars, without I know who's got it!"

"If I might be permitted, I would also suggest that I am also a loser to the extent of thirty-nine hundred dollars!" cried Dick—"or, at least, California Kit is, as it was her money I was betting, and she won. So we are about as much interested in this robbery matter, as you are, friend Hyatt."

"No one said you wasn't, young man, but you insinuated that I was cognizant of being robbed, while the robbery was taking place."

"Nothing of the sort, sir. I've no more idea that you would stoop to pick a man's pockets, than I would myself."

"Looke heer, boss. May a frozen ager-striker iceber'g of 'bout my frigid zone, hev a say in this contention?"

It was the muchly bewhiskered individual, Frozen Bill, who put the question.

"Yes; if you have got anything to say worth listening to, why say it!" Hyatt responded.

"Keerect, boss. 'Tain't much, nothin' but a s'picion yer see."

"Out with it, then, and no parleyin' about it! Whom do you suspect of having the money?"

"Well, you see, when ther young feller, yonder, come off o' ther stage, I kept an eye onter him, 'cause he looked ter me like er chap as would steal pennies off'm a dead man's eyes. Don't yer think he do, boss?"

"Go on!" thundered Hyatt, turning a searching glance on Dick, Junior. "It may be you are right."

"Waal, yer see," pursued Frozen Bill, "yer see'd ther feller as he left ther stage, an' he come an' stood close 'longside o' you for a minute. You was so bizzy a-watchin' the prize fight, that yer didn't see him, I reckon. Well, after he had stood there a minute, he come away an' went over to the bar'l, where he's sittin' now. That's all. I tho't mebbe if you'd search him you'd find your boddle."

"What have you to say for yourself?" David Hyatt demanded, gazing at Dick sternly.

"Nothing," was the good-natured reply. "I know no more about the money than you do."

"I don't know about that. You're rather a suspicious-looking chap, as several have remarked. Lads like you don't usually go sporting about, doing nothing for a living, unless they've got some way of getting along that won't bear investigation. Will you permit me to search you?"

"No, sir!"

"Ah! you won't, eh?"

"No, I will not. I am no thief, and I won't stand it to be searched like one."

"We will have to see about that, my fine fellow. Boys, seize him!"

There chanced to be about a dozen Vigilantes close to the barrel.

So suddenly did they wheel around and upset the barrel on which Dick was seated, that he could not save himself from being pitched to the floor.

Before he could rise he was pounced upon by the crowd, and in almost less time than it takes to tell it, he was securely bound, hand and foot.

Principal among those who had assisted in his capture was Paul Potter, who had, since his arrival in Bummer's Bar, become identified with the Vigilantes more by pushing into the membership than by any request he had received to join them.

He was one of those cheeky sort of individuals

who always make it a point to work themselves into prominent notice, whether they deserve it or not.

"So we got ye, did we?" he sneered, glaring at Dick, Jr., grimly. "You thought you'd escape."

"I had no thought of the kind!" was the reply. "I simply sought to prevent being insulted by a rabble of rowdies, like yourselves!"

"Hi! D'ye hear that, boys? Do you hear that, Mr. Hyatt? He calls us a rabble of rowdies!" shouted Potter.

"So you are!" Dick defied; "and if I ever get free I'll make some of you hump for this."

"Stand aside!" ordered Hyatt, coming up. "I'll soon see if this lad is guilty or not. If he is, we'll make an example of him, to warn others of his sort from trying any of their funny business around this town."

He quickly and thoroughly searched Dick's pockets, but only found two hundred dollars.

"That's mine," Dick said. "It's mine. I wagered it in private with California Kit. Give it to her. She won it."

"Yes, he did," assented the girl, coming up; "so you let me have it, Mr. Hyatt."

"I shall do as I choose about that, and take my own time about doing it, if you please, miss," the mine-owner retorted. "I mean to have the money I was robbed of, or make some one sweat for it."

"Well, I ain't got it, so let me go!" cried Dick.

"Not so fast, young man—don't be in a hurry. You are altogether too anxious to get away, it strikes me. Boys, search the floor of the room."

This was done, but of course no money was found.

"I've an idea, boss," spoke up Frozen Bill. "This hyer empty barrel hev a bung-hole in one end, an' he was a-settin' on the bar'l. Ef how as he stole the money, like 'nuff he stuffed it in-ter the bar'l fer safe-keepin', till he got a chance to hook it out again."

"Jest my idea!" chimed in Paul Potter. "He looks like a feller as would steal away things, an' hide 'em."

"I'll steal you when I get loose!" cried Dick, his eyes flashing fire.

"Oh! ye will, eh?" Potter leered. "Let's see you!" and reaching forward, he seized Dick's nose between his thumb and forefinger, and gave it a vengeful twig that brought tears to the boy's eyes.

The crowd laughed loudly, but only for a brief instant, for, to their astonishment, they saw California Kit spring forward, and deliver a stinging blow full between the superintendent's eyes.

Small and white though as was her fist, it evidently was made of hard material, and backed by plenty of muscle, for Paul Potter staggered back, and fell to the floor from the effects of the blow.

"Take that, you ruffian!" California Kit cried. "A man as will abuse a helpless prisoner, deserves to be killed two or three times every ten minutes."

Potter slowly arose to his feet. There was a glare of hatred in his eyes, as he shook his fist at the girl pugilist.

"Oh! never you mind, my dear; I'll get even with you yet!" he declared. "You'll find Paul Potter isn't the man to be insulted with impunity."

"Oh! isn't he? Now, really, I thought he was!" Kit replied, with a light laugh. "You go and pull Carl Clyde's nose again and I'll bet you will change your tune."

Potter evidently had no desire to repeat the offense, for with a grunt of disgust, he turned upon his heel, and walked away.

"Break open that barrel!" cried Hyatt, at this juncture, having finished searching Deadwood Dick Jr. "If the money's not to be found in it, this young man did not take it, it is likely, as he has none of it about his person."

"Look heer, mine frients, off you preak open dot barrel, you haff to pay for him!" cried Dutch Duff coming from behind the bar, where he had been engaged in patching up his face with court-plaster. "Dot barrel belongs to me, I wants you to understand."

"Lock up yer jaw, Dutchy!" replied a miner, "or I'll 'sick' the gal on ye!"

An ax was quickly procured, and the staves of the barrel as quickly smashed in.

Then they were sorted apart, and lo! and behold, there lay before those who were crowded around, the wallet of David Hyatt, and the other bundle of money that had been stolen from his pocket.

A wild shout went up from the crowd.

"The money! the money!"

"Yes, the money," assented Hyatt, picking it up. "Frozen Bill was right, after all. The lad is the thief."

"I did not take that money—I swear it by all I hold sacred!" cried Dick, sternly. "Some one has put up a job on me for a purpose, and if I am not mistaken, he who calls himself Frozen Bill is the man!"

"That's too thin!"

"Yer can't stuff us wi' none o' that!"

"That won't work!"

"String the cuss up!"

"Of course! Don't give him a show!"

Such, and ejaculations of similar import, were heard on either hand.

"I tell you what it is, gents!" cried Paul Potter; "there ain't a doubt but what this young cuss picked Hyatt's pocket and hid the money in the bar'l, just as Frozen Bill suggested. An' another thing: et's bin made plain ter ye that this boy an' gal stand in tergether, ap' the gal knows as much about the robbery as the boy. Consequently, one's as guilty as t'other, and they're as precocious a pair o' crooks for their age as you'd be apt to find in a year. What d'ye think, Mr. Hyatt?"

"I quite agree with you," the mine-owner assented. "By the rules and regulations of this camp, they must be punished. But, guilty or not, we must go about this matter in a proper manner, and so as not to make ourselves amenable to the law. There can be no doubt but what these young people were conspiring to defraud us by stealing the money, and then proposing to hold me good for the funds left in my care as stakes; therefore, they shall have a trial before a jury, and if found guilty, sentence will be passed upon them. In behalf of the people of Bummer's Bar, I will act as prosecuting counsel."

"And in this matter of the wagered money, I will hold it until the trial is over. If the prisoners are acquitted, the stakes go to the young woman, as California Kit fairly knocked Big-Mouth Mose out of time. If the prisoners are found guilty, the funds shall be used toward establishing a local jail, where prisoners can be jugged. Are these conditions satisfactory, boyees?"

"Hurrah! hurrah!" sounded the response, coming from a dozen throats.

"Then, seize and bind the girl!" ordered Hyatt.

This was finally done, after a struggle, but not until half a dozen of the gang had received black eyes at the hands of the plucky girl from Frisco.

"Now take the prisoners out upon the plaza, as the trial will at once be had. I will choose the jurors, and then all will be ready, except selecting some good man for a judge!"

"Ef et's a judge yer want, feller-galoots!" cried a stentorian voice, "allow me ter inform yer thet ther famous, original, veritable and time-tried Judge Lynch has arriv in town, an' aire ready ter tender ye his distinguished services on this momentuous o'casion!"

And following this speech, an odd-looking specimen of humanity pushed his way forward.

CHAPTER VII.

HOW DICK AND KIT WERE SENT ADRIFT.

THE man who had announced himself as the "original Judge Lynch" was about the bummier individual that had ever struck the town of Bummer's Bar.

He was a large-framed man, and, in the prime of his life, looked as if he might have been a man of prodigious physical powers. Now, however, his figure was somewhat bent and his hair and straggling beard were whitened with streaks of silver, giving him the appearance of one upward of sixty.

His face was thin and deeply furrowed and fiery red in color, and his eyes were bloodshot, and wore a haggard expression.

His hair and beard evidently had not been cut, or seen the use of a brush or comb, for months, the latter being stained with tobacco-juice and shockingly matted together.

He wore an old straw hat, minus the crown, a calico shirt ripped almost in shreds, and minus one sleeve, and a pair of ragged trousers, supported by one greasy suspender. He was almost barefooted, and out of one of the pockets of his pants protruded the long neck of a bottle.

Bummer's Bar boasted of some tough-looking worshipers of "booze," but this chap literally "knocked them all silly."

"Yes, feller galoots, I'm ther original Judge, an' don't yer fergit it!" he exclaimed, as he paused, with one bony hand resting on the bar, "an' I'm a cock-eyed coyote ef I hev'n't hed ther

honor o' actin' as chief cook an' bottle-washer at more lynchin'-bees than any man west o' ther Mississipp. Et hev bin many a year sence I first acted as judge, but sence then, I'll be durned fer a donkey ef I ain't sed 'three' fer over a hundred galoots. An' so, feller-citizens, ef ye want yer pic-nic ter go off in first-class style, jest 'p'int me judge o' ther ceremonies an' thar won't be a hitch ner a balk.

"I'm Lynch—that's the Judge,
An' I'm some on ther budge,—
I'm narvous, an' nigh all a-quiver;
But I'll send that 'ar lad
Ter a place warm and bad,—
Judge Lynch's head-quarters—Salt River!"

"Hurrah! first rate!" cried Paul Potter. "What der ye say, boyees—shall we 'p'int the tough vet'ran judge on this occasion? Yer can see he's the stuff!"

There was a ringing cry of assent from two-thirds of the men in the room, and they, of course, made up a majority.

Judge Lynch was invited to drink, and did so, and then all hands left the Daisy Saloon for the plaza.

The night was dark, and the heavens wore a threatening shroud of ominous clouds, which predicted a rain; hence it was necessary to call torches and lanterns into requisition, and the denizens of the mining-camp made an odd spectacle as they gathered about the glaring lights to attend the trial.

Chairs were brought from the saloons and a semicircle of seats arranged, which were occupied by the twelve men whom Hyatt had selected as jurors.

Just in front of these were two other seats which were allotted to the prisoners.

In front of them, with a couple of barrels for tables, Mr. Hyatt and Judge Lynch took their positions, while the crowd made a circle entirely around the scene, holding torches and lanterns above their heads.

After taking his stand and clearing his throat, David Hyatt said:

"Citizens of the mining-camp of Bummer's Bar, we have before us, as a people—a law-abiding and honorable people—a duty to discharge, namely: the trying of two persons, both strangers to us, on the charge of conspiracy to rob and defraud.

"The names of these persons, as they have been given to us, appear to be Carl Clyde and California Kit, otherwise Kitty Kenyon.

"The first-named is charged with having cut a slit in the pantaloons of your representative, in such a manner as to lay open the left-hand pocket, and to have extracted from said pocket, feloniously, a wallet containing a one-thousand dollar note, and also a roll of bills, amounting to thirty-nine hundred dollars, which had been given into charge of your representative as wagers on a boxing bout between California Kit and Big Mose Magoon.

"It appears that both prisoners arrived in town about the same time, knew each other, and it stands to reason that they were here for the purpose of accumulating money, through the girl's pugilistic accomplishments. They, therefore, were in collusion, and being so, in one sense, is pretty reasonable assurance that they were likewise in collusion in more senses than one.

"The young man was seen, on leaving the stage, to stand close beside me for several minutes, and then go immediately to the barrel, upon which he perched himself, and in which the money was afterward found. As he must have covered the hole in the barrel, in sitting upon it, no one else could have slipped the money into it.

"As your representative felt the money in his pocket but a moment before said Carl Clyde left the stage, it stands to reason that said Carl Clyde stole said money, secreted it, and that he and the girl prize-fighter stood in collusion to keep said money, and in addition, to attempt to hold your representative responsible for its loss.

"The laws of this camp, by a popular vote of the people, are to the effect that any person who shall be adjudged guilty of stealing, or robbing, or swindling, or of attempting or conspiring to steal, rob or swindle, shall be punished by hanging.

"Therefore, your representative would respectfully refer the case in question to that most honorable judge and jury of this court, for decision, praying in the behalf of the people, and honorable local government, that the verdict be rendered in accordance with the facts stated."

Mr. Hyatt then sat down, and the unprepossessing and bleary-eyed Judge Lynch arose.

"Ther prisoners have no counsel, hev they?" he demanded.

"No, nor they don't need any. As judge of the court, you have the questioning power," Hyatt replied, with a shrug.

"Carl Clyde arise!" thundered the judge, tragically.

Dick arose.

His face was well composed, but his gleaming eyes betrayed the indignation repressed within his bosom.

"Prisoner at ther bar, is your name Carl Clyde?" demanded the judge.

"No, sir."

"What is it, then?"

"Richard Bristol, sir."

"Did ye say ye war Carl Clyde, sence ye hev been in Bummer's Bar?"

"I did."

"What for?"

"Because I chose to."

"Phew! Did you steal the money?"

"No, sir. I did not!"

"Did you ever steal?"

"Never!"

"How came Mr. Hyatt's money in the bar?"

"I don't know; I have no idea."

"Did you stand beside him?"

"For an instant, I did!"

"Did you rip his breeches down the leg?"

"No, sir! I did not!"

"Were not you and California Kit in kerlusion to git the money, by hook, or crook?—are you not pards?"

"No, sir. I never met her, before to-night—I never heard of her until to-night."

"What is your business?"

"I have none, just now, except that I've been on a prospecting trip, and looking for business."

"Sit down!"

Dick obeyed.

He had answered the questions with a decision and coolness that surprised nearly every one who heard him.

"Kittie Kenyon, arise!" ordered the Judge.

Kit arose.

"What is your name?"

"Kittie Kenyon."

"Where do you live?"

"Wherever night overtakes me."

"What is your business?"

"Knockin' out would-be sluggers, an' 'tendin' to my own affairs."

This, with a little laugh.

"What do you know about this case?"

"Nary; and I'll bet Dick didn't have a finger in stealin' the money! He's not that kind of catnip."

"Did you ever know him, before to-night?"

"Nixy! no more'n he ever heard ov me."

"Who d'ye think did the job?"

Kit looked deliberately about, until her gaze fell upon Frozen Bill.

"I reckon his whiskers, yonder, w'ot calls himself Frozen Bill, knows about as much as any one," she declared.

"What makes you think so?"

"Because, he was the first one who seemed to have any idea where the money was."

"That will do. Frozen Bill, take the stand."

Frigid William shuffled forward, with a growl of displeasure.

"What do you want of me?" he demanded.

"What do you know about the robbery?"

"Nothin'!"

"Did you see Richard Bristol standing beside Mister Hyatt?"

"Yes, I did; so did others."

"Say yes, sir, to this court!"

"Yes, sir!"

"Did you see the accused commit the robbery?"

"N—no!"

"Did you see him put anything in the bar?"

"N—o, sir."

"How came yer to suspect that ther money was in ther bar'l, then?"

"It jest popped inter my head, sir."

"Did you, at no time, stand near Mr. Hyatt, while ther boxin' was goin' on?"

"No, sir."

"Are you a stranger in camp?"

"Yes. I'm frum 'way up in Washington Territory, whar it's cold enough to freeze a nigger, in winter time."

"Your name is Frozen Bill?"

"Yes. That's et, you bet!"

"Bill what?"

"Buck."

"Very well, Buck; sit down!"

Then, turning to the jury, Judge Lynch went on:

"Gents o' thes hyer jury, I hev questioned as far as I see fit, an' I'll be chawed up by catty-mounts, and sniggled at by snakes, ef I can see any posertuv convictin' proof ag'in' ther pris-

oner, Bristol. As fer ther gal, she aire out o' the question, an' I can't see how ther boy can be convicted jest because he stood beside Hyatt a minute, an' arterward sot on ther bar'l, in which the money was found. Therefore, galoots o' ther bench o' jurisdiction, I advise ye, in consultin' on a verdict, ter weigh the evidence, same's ye would nuggets, or Chicager bacon, an' give ther prisoners ther decent size of a show fer ther white alley. When ye yell out ther verdict, I'll finish up the case, an' we'll all have a snifter—your treat!"

The jurymen were a hardy-looking lot of sons of the mines, whom, be it said to his credit, David Hyatt had not selected from his own staff of employees; therefore, they had nothing to fear from the mine-owner, nor were they unduly influenced by him.

They left their seats, and walked toward the bank of Reese river, which seemed to surge around the bend with a louder roar, than ever before.

In five minutes they returned to their seats.

The crowd craned their necks forward, eager to hear the verdict.

"Gentlemen o' ther jury, hev you arrived at a verdict?" demanded Judge Lynch.

"Your honor!" said the foreman, rising, "we have found the parties guilty!"

"Then!" quickly cried David Hyatt, rising, "I, as Chief of the Law and Order and Vigilance Committee of Bummer's Bar, do hereby—"

"Sit down!"

It was Judge Lynch's voice that made the order, and the judge held a glittering "six" in his grip, which was at full cock, and leveled directly at the mine-owner.

"Down with ye!" yelled the judge. "I'm runnin' this hyer court, ef ther court knows herself, an' ef there's any sentencin' ter be did, I'll purty near take keer o' ther job, myself!"

"You have nothing to do with it!" roared Hyatt.

"But, I have, tho'. Them prisoners ain't done nothin' to deserve lynchin', an' they ain't goin' ter be lynched. Prisoners at the bar, you have been found guilty, and must be punished 'cordin' ter yer crime. 'Tain't right ter hang a young pair like yer 'uns, fer ther first offense, but I'll hev ter stick et on ter yer, purty good, tho'. So I'll sentence yer ter be put onter a raft, or inter a boat, bound hand an' foot, and sent down ther river, a-kitin'. Ef yer don't get spilt off, ye will be a devil o' a ways from here, when ye get reskued, an' ye'r' warned ef yer ever show muzzle around Bummer's Bar ag'in, you'll be burnt at the stake, reg'lar Injun fashion.

"Now, then, I'll leave et ter ther crowd, ef Judge Lynch ain't give as tough a sentence as ther pair o' kids deserve, sence the boodle's bin recovered."

All eyes turned instinctively toward Hyatt, to see how he would receive the proposition.

He arose and gazed for a moment at the two prisoners, then said:

"Men of Bummer's Bar, I am satisfied that the sentence imposed by Judge Lynch is sufficiently severe. Let a raft be rigged at once and the prisoners set adrift."

He then turned to depart, but the ringing voice of Deadwood Dick, Jr., caused him to pause.

"Stop! David Hyatt!" the young Avenger cried. "Before you go, hear me! You consider you are acting justly, but you are not, for neither myself nor California Kit were concerned in the robbery. I wish to ask of you one favor. Release Kit and let her go free. I am not afraid, and will take the trip alone. But, for God's sake, do not send her adrift."

"You both go together!" Hyatt returned, coldly and decisively, and then turned away and disappeared in the direction of the Daisy Saloon.

All was now excitement.

The novelty of setting the prisoners adrift on the roaring and dangerous river, appeared to appease the appetite of the crowd for lynch law, and while some of them stood guard over Dick and Kit, others lent a willing hand toward the hasty construction of a raft, since there was no boat in the camp.

"Do you think we can live through the ordeal, Dick?" the girl from Frisco asked, in a low tone, as the two sat side by side.

"Doubtful," Dick replied. "The stream is very rough and swift, and I've a fear we won't be able to get out of this scrape. But if we do—"

And his teeth went together with a click.

"What then, Dick?"

"Vengeance!" he replied. "I'll make the toughs of this camp wish this night's work had never been done!"

"Bravo! And count me in as with you. As we are set adrift, two helpless waifs upon troubled waters, so we will brave together the perils before us."

"Right you are! I would my hand was free, that I could grasp yours. There's a dark night before us, full of terrors, but we will be brave, and if we get through safely together, I fancy we will be drawn more closely together than years of ordinary acquaintance could effect."

"True. I am glad the sentence is what it is, for something tells me we will get out all right. It was lucky Judge Lynch passed the sentence."

"How so?"

"Because he favored us. Ye remember me speakin' of Old Monte?"

"Yes."

"Well, Monte an' Judge Lynch, are the same."

"The deuce you say!"

"You bet! Monte walked in ter find us in trouble, and he took about the best way o' gettin' us out, he could think of. He know'd 'twouldn't be no use tryin' to rescue us, so ye can see by the sentence that he thinks we can get free, in that way. Oh! Monte's a brick!"

"I should say so. And you're really his daughter, eh?"

"Well, no—that is, we only pass off for father and daughter. I met Monte, 'bout a year ago, when he was near dead with the 'jams,' and nursed him through an' we've stuck together, ever since."

Rain began to come down, just then, and was immediately accompanied by sharp lightning and heavy thunder.

Soon the shouts from the river's edge announced that the raft was completed.

"Keep a stiff u'per lip, now!" Dick encouraged. "We've a journey ahead that bids fair to take us close to the portals of death, but we may yet escape, so keep up courage."

"I will be brave!" Kit replied. "With you for company, I feel sure I shall be safe!"

Just then, a crowd of miners came rushing up, headed by Paul Potter.

"Yank a-hold of 'em, boys," Potter cried. "We'll give 'em a ride on a river that's worse than Salt river."

And the prisoners were seized, bodily, and dragged toward the noisy, rushing stream.

The rain was now coming down in torrents, putting out the torches.

As for the lightning, it came in long vivid glares, one flash rapidly succeeding another, and making the roar and boom of the thunder almost continuous.

The raft had been launched, and was held to the shore by a lariat.

It was a hastily built concern, about ten by twelve feet in size and threatened to go to pieces at the least strain.

The prisoners were roughly tossed on it, and then with one sweep of his knife, Paul Potter cut the lariat, and away the float went.

As it swung out on the wild stream, Deadwood Dick Jr. was seen standing erect, with one released hand raised on high, brought into startling relief by the lightning's white glare.

"Beware! men of Bummer's Bar!" his ringing voice was heard to shout—"beware, I say, for the curse of the new Deadwood Dick is upon you and your accursed camp. I shall live for revenge! So tremble, when you see the Sign of the Crimson Crescent!"

Then, the raft swept around the bend of the bar, and leaped away out of view, through the darkness of that wild, tempestuous night—a night never to be forgotten by the occupants of the torrent-driven raft.

CHAPTER VIII.

A SERIES OF ASTONISHERS.

DEADWOOD DICK, JR., and Kit having been set adrift upon the roaring river, the men of Bummer's Bar lost no time in getting to shelter, the better share of them seeking their respective homes.

A few of course were there who sought out the saloons, but they were the rougher element, to whom almost any shelter was acceptable.

At the Daisy Saloon no business was doing. The events of the evening had spoiled the professional gamblers' business, and they had given up in disgust until some more propitious occasion.

David Hyatt, it appeared, had gone directly home, and those who flocked to the Daisy were mainly 'Dutch Duff's boarders,' who never had a cent to spend, but who always stood ready to encourage trade for the house, providing it was at some other person's expense.

"Shendleman!" Duff said, eying the crowd

who ranged themselves along the wall opposite the counter, "did you send der young devils away?"

"We did!" responded the bums, in a chorus.

"Das vas goot!" Duff smiled, helping himself to a nip of "private" bug-juice, which was kept for his individual use. "Das vas very goot. Id vas quite vet, mitout in der rain, eh?"

"Awful wet!" assented the 'boarders,' with one simultaneous shiver.

"Yaw, dot vas so. But, vile id vas wet outside, das vas der blace vere all peobles shouldt go, who vas dry!"

The 'boarders,' however, were blind, as far as to seeing the point of the hint, and retained their positions, sure some one would happen along who would feel disposed to set 'em up.

And they hoped not in vain.

Frozen Bill and Paul Potter entered two hours later, and the former threw down some money and ordered up the drinks; after which he and Potter took seats at a table, in the rear part of the saloon.

Both men looked in rather a disagreeable humor, but Potter's expression savored most of triumph.

"Well, here we are," Frozen Bill said, grimly, "what do you want?"

"I want ter have a chat, just as I told ye," Potter replied, as he lit a cigar. "You don't seem to recognize me, it seems?"

"How should I recognize you, when I know no one this far south?"

"Bah! Give us a rest on that! It won't work! You're not from Washington territory, nor nowheres near there."

"You lie!"

"Look out! Don't get too tonguey, or I'll give you away!" and Potter showed his teeth in a villainous grin.

"What do you mean?" Frozen Bill demanded.

"I mean that I know you and your past, from the time you married Alice Paulding, until today. Your name is not Frozen Bill, but—"

Potter here leaned forward, and uttered the name in an undertone.

Frozen Bill started violently.

"Who the deuce are you?" he growled.

"Paul Potter, formerly of Boston."

"Ha! you—"

"Married your wife after you deserted her. Of course it was not a legitimate marriage, but I did not know it until I sounded back into the past life of Alecia Anna Paulding. Then, I found that she had previously been married to you, but you had deserted her, and she had put your child in the poor-house."

"We never had a child of our own!"

"Oh! I'm aware of that. It was understood that the child had been adopted by you. But, in reality, it had been stolen by you, you hoping to make money out of it, as the parent was wealthy. Before you got ready to spring your trap, however, the parent failed, for every cent he was worth, and as it had been supposed his child had been drowned in the Charles river, he left Boston for good, and you had the child on your hands. You and your wife had a quarrel, and you skipped for parts unknown."

Frozen Bill uttered a surly grunt.

"You know too much!" he growled. "What else have you been smart enough to learn?"

"Oh! lots more."

"Well? What of it? What do you want? What do you expect?"

"I'll tell you: You are a shrewd fellow, and as big a rascal as ever lived, unless I bar myself. You are here for a purpose, Budd Bristol, and that purpose has been accomplished."

"Sh! Do not utter that name again! I would not have it known I was ever here for all—"

"The wealth of the Niobrara ranch," interrupted Potter. "I don't know about that. The ranch is worth two hundred thousand at the least."

"Perhaps. But, go on. What do you mean about accomplishing my purpose?"

"Why, you accomplished that, when you laid the charge of robbery to young Bristol, and got him sent off down the river. Oh! you see I'm a daisy, Budd! You never knew me until now, but I've known you, and have been following up your case out of curiosity for a long time. You've been playing a strong game, and bid fair to win yet. You see, I understand the case from A to Izzard, and—"

"You calculate you have me somewhat in your power?"

"I suppose I have, since you remind me of it, but I should not have thought of mentioning it. No, that ain't my lay. I know that only a few obstacles stand between you and the owner-

ship of the Niobrara property. One of them was your brother's son, whom you have disposed of to-night!"

"You think he is effectually disposed of?" Frozen Bill demanded eagerly.

"Most likely. I don't believe that raft can live fifteen minutes on Reese river, and the two on board will no doubt be drowned."

"I hope so," was the grim response.

"But another obstacle was your wife. You settled her, and she is dead!"

"Curse you, how do you know?"

"Because I do. I know where the boy buried her."

"Then, is there any other obstacle?"

"Yes. Byron Bristol."

"Bah! If he is alive he will never turn up. No trace can be found of him, although I have had men hunting for him for years."

"There's few things so easy to make, as a mistake," Potter laughed. "I, too, have been on the lookout for Byron Bristol, and know that he was alive, and in Shaefer's Flats, two weeks ago!"

"Then—"

"Hold on! Don't get excited, now. Let me talk. Long excesses in drinking have lost the man his mind, so that he has forgotten his own name. It may not seem possible, but it's a fact. His memory is dead, so far as the past is concerned, and he is but a tottering wreck. He is nevertheless as sane as you or I, and if he ever overcomes the liquor habit, his memory will no doubt return to him. I expect him here, any day, now, as he is wandering this way; so it will be to your interest to remain right here, in Bummer's Bar. When he is out of the way, the Niobrara ranch is yours."

"True! And, then, I may naturally suppose you will try to bleed me?"

"No. I've no intentions of anything of the sort, in that direction. I've no objections to telling you, however, that I'm in for making a haul, and want the assistance of a villain of your fire-proof caliber."

"Ah!"

Frozen Bill appeared considerably relieved. "Well, let's hear from you. You're evidently shrewd enough, yourself, so I fail to see what you could want of my assistance."

"Well, two of a kind beat a single, you know, even be it an ace or six-spot. Listen, and I will give you an outline, or as good a one as I can."

"We will go back to Boston, years ago, when you were wedded to your child-wife, Alice Anna Paulding!"

"Bah! to the furies with the woman. What has she to do with the case?"

"Steady, now! You shall learn, as we progress. You and Anna were married young. You had a position in the employ of a wealthy young married blood, named Hollis. You were his valet."

"Well?"

"Hollis knew nothing in particular about you, not even that you were married, and you went under the assumed name of Joe Ferris?"

"Correct."

"Well, you staid with Henry Hollis for a while, but finally he caught you under suspicious circumstances, in his private office, and you were summarily bounced."

"This sort of treatment, it appears, aroused all the villain in your nature, and partly out of revenge, and partly with a view to extorting money, you stole Hollis's little child, and adopted it, for the time being. A dead child was seen floating in Charles river, answering somewhat to the Hollis child's description, but the body was not recovered, and the parents finally gave up search, and mourned their pet as dead."

"The loss killed Mrs. Hollis, and shortly afterward, Hollis broke, made an assignment, and left for parts unknown. You quarreled with your wife, and also left; she put the child in the poor-house, and, a year later, I met and married her, in Providence. A child was born to us, but died, after we parted. She went her way, and I went mine."

"Well, well! What are you driving at?"

"You shall see. The Hollis child remained in the poor-house, and finally, was recognized, by a former nurse; the matter was then investigated, and finally, the facts all came out, and made quite a sensation. The nurse got possession of the child, by promising to devote her life to searching for its father, whose whereabouts was unknown."

"A search was made for you, and you had to skip."

"Previous to this discovery of the child's identity, Anna had me juggled for desertion. When I got out, I learned all about her previous marriage, and when the child's case was made

public, I resolved to keep track of the case, and I have ever since, and also of you and Alice, believing some day I would strike a bonanza. It was in this way I came to know so much about your other matters."

"But about the child?"

"Well, armed with proofs of the child's identity, Phyllis Penrose, the nurse, with her child, wandered far and wide in search of Henry Hollis. Heaven only knows where they did not go. Finally, when the girl was twelve years old, Phyllis, who was a saving woman, and had amassed some money, put her *protegee* in a seminary in 'Frisco to be educated, and continued her search alone.

"The girl only remained in school two years, then ran away, and was lost all track of. Even Phyllis could not find her; but she kept patiently on, and—"

Here Potter paused.

"Go on!" Frozen Bill cried, excitedly. "I am interested."

"Are you?"

"You bet! Much you have told me is news."

"Indeed! Well, Phyllis Penrose arrived in Bummer's Bar by stage to-night."

"Phew!"

"I tell you, I'm hot on a trail. And if I am not mistaken, her former *protegee*, Rolla Hollis, came in on the same stage, and is now enjoying a voyage down Reese river, in company with Richard Bristol, *alias* Deadwood Dick Jr."

"Good God! Not California Kit?"

"You bet!"

"What makes you think so?"

"A discovery. In dragging the girl to the raft, her sleeve became pulled above her elbow, exposing her bare arm. As she lay upon the raft, her sleeve still remained up. As the raft moved off, I was close to the water's edge. You remember the vivid flash of lightning. My gaze went then intuitively to the girl's bare arm, and what do you suppose I saw?"

"How should I know?"

"I saw a crimson crescent upon that arm, of about the size a quarter-dollar would cover—saw it as plain as I see you now."

"Ha! and the boy bade us beware of the sign of the Crimson Crescent!"

"Yes; but I hold that as a coincidence; he, too, may know of the mark, and used it as his emblem. But the crescent has a far greater significance."

"What? Ha! I remember!" and Budd Bristol sprang to his feet excitedly. "Upon the arm of Henry Hollis's child was a birth-mark in the shape of a vivid crimson crescent!"

"Just so!"

"Good Heaven! Then there can be no doubt but what the girl boxer is really Hollis's child!"

"Or was, rather, for I've misgivings she is drowned ere this. If so, all my long trail of searching and scheming is baffled, when I had begun to hope I was on the road to a fortune."

"How do you mean?"

"I'll explain. It has been only a few months since that I discovered the whereabouts of Henry Hollis."

"The deuce you say!"

"No; Henry Hollis."

"Where?"

"Right here in Bummer's Bar."

"Great Julius Caesar!"

"No; Henry Hollis."

"Still poor?"

"Nixee. Worth half a million, if a cent. You saw him to-night."

"No?"

"I say you did. The man called David Hyatt and Henry Hollis, formerly of Boston, are one and the same person."

Frozen Bill fairly gasped with astonishment, and ran his fingers through his hair.

"By thunder! I believe you are right," he said.

"I know I am right!" Potter replied, confidently. "I have satisfied myself beyond a doubt on that point. And now, can you stand another astonisher?"

"Yes; fling ahead."

"Well, sir, Hyatt, or Hollis, is married, and his wife is Mrs. Alice Anna Paulding-Bristol-Potter-Hollis!"

CHAPTER IX.

A NIGHT OF TERROR.

AWAY down the canyon, as the furious river ran between the mighty mountain walls, tore the frail raft that was the only thing between the two prisoners and a watery grave.

As the raft swept around the bend with a sudden lurch, immediately after Deadwood Dick, Jr., had uttered his curse upon the camp, the young Avenger was jerked off his equilibri-

um, and in falling, came within an ace of being pitched into the foaming torrent.

He caught himself in the nick of time, however, and dropped on the middle of the raft, close beside California Kit. He then found that the bonds encircling his wrists were loosening by stretching and straining, so that it took him but a minute to free his hands. At once he drew a knife from his pocket and cut the bonds about his feet, and quickly freed Kit's bonds. Both were free!

"There! We've at least so much advantage," he said.

"Yes, and if worst comes to worst, we'll go down together, Dick!" she said, encircling his waist with her arm.

"Right you are!" he replied. "I'll not desert you, even to save myself, Kittie. But, let's not think of giving up the ghost yet awhile, for our craft behaves herself quite well. The only trouble to be feared, I think, is in rounding some of the bends. The raft may then go crashing against some of the rocks. However, let us hope for the best."

So they clung together, and were borne on, on through the terrible night, which seemed to them more like some hideous nightmare than stern reality.

The rain poured down in steady drenching torrents, and the lightning flashed luridly, making a weird and awe-inspiring display, answered by the thunder crash and boom.

The thunder and the river, indeed, seemed trying to outdo each other in adding to the din.

The raft kept nearly to the middle of the stream, but rocked and pitched, fearfully, and the ropes that held the thing together, threatened to part at any moment under the strain.

On! on! on! flew the raft, upon the bosom of the torrent, which seemed to gather volume and increased speed at every rod of its noisy course between the frowning mountain walls.

"Kit!" Dick said, as the girl clung to him, "this raft ain't going to hold together long. The ropes are giving way, I think."

"Oh! Dick!"

"I hate to alarm you, my friend, but there is no use of concealing the truth. There is no telling what minute we may be buried in the seething waters, and be rudely separated. So let us be prepared. When this raft goes to pieces we may both be drowned, or only one of us, or again, mayhap neither of us. In either case, Kit, remember that you have won the love of Dick Bristol! Strange fate, and stranger circumstances have thrown us together, and this has caused a stronger feeling to take root in my heart, than merely ordinary friendship."

"Oh! Dick, I am so glad to hear you say those words, for I am uttering my own feelings, believe me! I love you, and here, midst all this peril, I am only too glad to tell you so. Oh! Dick! Dick! if we could only escape!"

And she threw her arms impulsively about his neck, and their lips met in the first kiss of love's young dream.

For a moment neither spoke; then Dick said:

"If we both escape, my little love, we may still become separated in this gloom. If you escape, go back to Bummer's Bar, and rejoin your friend Monte. If I escape, I will then know where to look for you. If I do not escape, and you never see me again—"

"I will avenge you!" Kit cried, earnestly, "and your words to the men of Bummer's Bar to-night shall be fulfilled."

"Bravo! And should I escape, and you not, I will avenge you, my darling, and make the name of the New Deadwood Dick such a terror in the camp, that every man will quake with very fear, when he hears it. To this I swear, and seal the oath with a kiss!"

And, as he suited action to the word, there came a fearful crash of thunder; there was a grinding noise under the raft; the timbers suddenly parted, letting the young lovers into the foaming vortex of angry waters.

As they went down, Dick's left arm was clasped about Kittie's waist, and when they came up, they were struck and thumped with the debris of the wreck.

Nerved to desperation, however, Dick struck out manfully for the shore, pushing aside timbers and propelling himself with his right arm.

By superhuman exertion he managed to keep his and Kit's head above water, and at last his hand touched shore, and grasping the rocky edge, he found he could touch bottom.

It was not until he was nearly strangled that he succeeded in getting Kit upon land, for she was now limp and apparently lifeless; then he drew himself out of the water.

As great as was his anxiety about the girl, he was obliged to rest a moment before he could

make a move to see what ailed her, so exhausted was he.

They had got ashore on the same side of the stream that Bummer's Bar was located on, and were now in the narrow stage-trail.

At last Dick got his breath, and crawled over to Kit.

"My God! she is cold and motionless!" he gasped, "and has no pulse. No, nor does her heart beat. Oh, Kit! Kit! have I lost you, too?"

He waited until a lightning flash gave him a chance to examine her, for the darkness was intense.

The flash—a long, vivid glare—soon came, and he made the discovery of a slight bruise upon her temple, not enough to abrade the skin, and still, perhaps, a blow hard enough to kill her.

There was also a wound on the top of her head which was bleeding freely.

"Great Father! she is dead!" Dick cried, kissing the white but beautiful face, with tears running down his cheeks. "And I have now two debts of vengeance to settle instead of one. Ay! and no time must be lost. 'Tis less than an hour since I left Bummer's Bar, and they will not expect me back. But I'll go back, send Old Monte to watch over the girl, and strike my first blow to-night!"

Raising the limp form in his arms, he set out at a rapid stride toward the camp.

A half-hour's rapid walk and he was upon the bar.

There were but few lights burning, as he skulked through the camp to the rear of the bar, where there were many acres of land not yet built up.

It was still raining, and no one was abroad.

He at length found a tool-house, near the ore-mill, which was open. There he tenderly laid poor Kittie upon a bench, and after kissing her cold lips repeatedly, took his departure.

"Now, then, for vengeance!" he cried, as he strode toward the Daisy Saloon. "They shall know before they sleep to-night—these men of Bummer's Bar—that the boy they started on the route to destruction has switched off and returned—that the junior Deadwood Dick is even as revengeful of injury as was his undaunted predecessor. Ha! ha! David Hyatt, you could have saved us but you wouldn't. Why not take you for my first victim, and then follow with Paul Potter and Frozen Bill? By that time the people will tremble at the Sign of the Crimson Crescent, I think!"

CHAPTER X.

THE TWO FATHERS' REVELATIONS.

THE announcement of Paul Potter, caused Frozen Bill, *alias* Budd Bristol, even more astonishment than had the previous revelations.

"She here, and married to Henry Hollis?" he ejaculated. "Why, that seems hardly credible."

"It's a fact, just as hard, and don't you forget it. I know it to be so, for I have personally interviewed her ladyship. You see, Hollis, or Hyatt as we will call him, met her in Omaha, before he came here, and she played her cards so nicely that he married her. I knew of the affair at the time, but they disappeared, and I didn't get track of them until quite recently."

"Then, you came here?"

"Yes. I made bold to call upon her. She wasn't over glad to see me, you know, but I didn't care so much about that. We talked over old times, and finally, as I was about to depart, I ventured to snatch a kiss or two," and Potter laughed.

"You rogue!" chuckled Bristol. "Really I begin to admire you."

"I thought you would, as our acquaintance ripened. There is nothing one-horse about me. But, I haven't told you the best of it. Just as I was snatching the kisses, you know, who should pop in but Hyatt, himself. Ha! ha! ha!"

"The deuce! I'll bet he was thunderstruck!" "I should say so. He demanded to know what was the meaning of it, and Anna's ready wit got me out of it."

"How?"

"Oh! easy enough. You see, when Hyatt met her she still bore my name. Luck, you bet! Well, she just turned around, and told Davy that I was her brother, Paul, just from the city of Chicago, and had come West to get work. The old man didn't believe it until I showed him some letters that had been sent to me in Chicago, a month before. Then he accepted the situation for all it was worth, and made me welcome."

"Anna bawled him to give me employment, and, although I really didn't need work, he

gave me a job as superintendent of work in the mine."

"Well?"

"Well, now that you know so much, I want you to join me in making a big haul. If we win, you get half. If not, we can skip."

"How do you propose to work it?"

"Well, you see, I've learned that Hyatt has got a quarter of a million in clean cash, but haven't been able to find out *where* it is, though I am satisfied it is in this camp."

"Doesn't Anna know?"

"Yes, but don't think she'd give it away. She worships Hyatt, and he appears to think a good bit of her."

"Worships him, eh?"

"Yes."

"But, she might be worked, under threat of exposure."

"True. But we shall bleed Hyatt, first, on the girl question. We can work a big boodle out of him, I reckon. Now, then, having done that, Anna will disgorge, handsomely, before she will risk exposure."

"You bet. Ha! ha! we will make Hyatt's fortune look sick, eh, before we are through with this business."

"I should smile! It's a pity about losing the girl, as, if we could get hold of her, we could get more money out of Hyatt. But, you may bet that's all knocked in the head, for that raft could not live for a mile, on Reese river, and the two prisoners are doomed, long ere this."

"I hope the boy is, anyhow. Curse it, I have feared him, and hunted him, ever since his mother ran away, and joined him. We chased them for a whole day, but they finally eluded us."

"It's lucky you came here, in disguise, for the kid would have killed you, at sight."

"How did you know me?"

"I knew you were coming here—it matters not how. I dropped to you, when you suggested it was Dick who stole the money. I saw you pick Hyatt's pocket, and slip the money into the barrel."

"I believe you lie."

"Not a bit of it. Now, we've talked long enough here; let's go to my room in the hotel and spend the remaining portion of the night in perfecting our plans of operation!"

"All right. We'll have a drink first."

They arose from the table and went to the bar. They had been sitting close to a window, from which a pane of glass was wanting. This window looked out upon the vacant lot at one side of the saloon.

As they left the table, a man outside skulked away, with a low chuckle.

He had been both watching and listening—for the conspirators had not talked below an ordinary pitch of voice.

When David Hyatt turned away from the scene of the trial of Deadwood Dick Jr., and California Kit, it was with no feeling that he had done wrong, in not making an attempt to save the prisoners.

He was a man who detested a thief, above all other classes of criminals, and he felt convinced that it had been Dick who had robbed him, and that California Kit knew all about the affair; hence he argued that it was no more than right that they should be punished.

He went to his cabin, and found that his wife had retired for the night; so he turned up the light, and sat down in the front room, and listened to the howling of the storm, without.

He tried to direct his thoughts to business, but could not. His mind would, in spite of all his efforts, wander back to the roaring river, and the two human beings whom he had consigned to its mercy.

"God in heaven!" he gasped, as he arose and paced the floor, "why cannot I get that matter off my mind? It seems to haunt me like some grim phantom."

"The boy may not have been guilty, after all, and if not, I am responsible for two lives. I wish, now that I come to think of it, I had heeded the lad's request, and spared the girl."

Thought gave him no ease, and as the wind moaned round the house, dashing the torrents of rain against the window-panes, and the thunder rolled and lightning hissed, he nearly grew distracted.

"I can't stand this," he muttered, after he had paced to and fro for some time. "It seems as if I had committed some terrible crime, and a feeling of guilt comes over me. What have I done—consigned two human beings to a watery grave? Good God! what have I done? The past rushes back upon me, with sickening effect. I fancy I see my own child drowning in the

river—she whom I have so long mourned as dead!

"What brings to me this strange thought? Can there be a possibility that—that—"

He covered his face with his hands, to shut out a vision too terrible to bear.

He paced the floor rapidly, but could not dispel the haunting thought—what if it should turn out that California Kit *was* his long-lost daughter, and he had consigned her to a watery grave?

The more his mind dwelt upon the matter, the more excited he grew, and he finally seized his hat and went forth into the pouring night, without any vague idea of where he was going.

Involuntarily, however, he made his way to the Daisy Saloon, and entered, a strange glare in his eyes, as if he were eager for a fight with some one of those who were lounging about the room.

As he entered, the majority of the *habitués* were gathered about a long settee that stood at one side of the room, and to which no less a personage than the self-styled Judge Lynch was securely strapped, in a reclining position.

There was a wild light of insanity burning in the tramp's eyes, and his disheveled hair and haggard face gave him a terrible appearance.

He gnashed his teeth with rage, and his hands opened and shut convulsively, while a white froth gathered upon his lips.

"Let me up!" he fairly shrieked—"let me up, I tell ye, or by the gods I'll cut your hearts out, and trample them in under foot! Release me, ye accursed wretches, till I hunt down my bitter foe, for I *know* he is here in this very building, and I'll have his life's blood for the wrongs he did me. Oh! curse ye! curse ye all!" "I see it all now, when it is too late—when it is too late! My poor boyee—my poor long-lost boy he's gone down the river to destruction, an' who sent him there? It wasn't me, his father—no! no! no! Et war you coyotes who live here in ther town o' Bummer's Bar. You sent my two babies to death, and I shall hold you responsible. And you, David Hyatt, war the chief cause o' their death—ay! you! you! you!"

And here the man uttered shriek after shriek, and tried with almost superhuman efforts to burst asunder the cords that bound him.

But care had been taken to secure him firmly, and all his efforts were unavailing.

"What is the matter of him?" Hyatt demanded, uneasily.

"Ye see, boss, et's a case o' the trimbles, I allow," replied a miner. "He got tuk wi' a fit a bit ago, an' went to cavortin' around so dangerous that we had ter rope him. Yender's Big-Mouth Mose, a-lyin' under the table as stiff an' stark as er dead herrin'. Et war the Jedge, heer, who friz ontar Mose's thrut till he had choked the life clean out o' him. An' he war a-comin' fer ther rest o' us, only that we lassoed him, and roped him, as you see."

"His is evidently a bad case," Hyatt said, half pityingly. "He is an alcoholic wreck, and it is the lack of drink that makes him so violent now. I fancy if he had a few drinks he would straighten up."

"That's just what I've been tellin' the boys, boss. Shell I fetch some o' the bug?"

"Yes. The poor devil is evidently a hard sufferer, and I feel inclined to do what I can for him, as I fancy that, perhaps, he may be able to give me some information I want."

"But, boss, he's killed Big-Mouth Mose," interposed another miner.

Hyatt shrugged his shoulders.

"Small loss to the camp," he allowed; "besides, this poor devil is crazy, and not responsible for his actions. Bring the liquor, I'll pay for it!"

A brimming glass of whisky was procured and placed to Judge Lynch's parched lips. He gulped it down with a gusto that showed how much he was suffering for the want of stimulant.

As the effect of the liquor went coursing through his veins, he grew less and less wild and crazy, and by the time he had gulped a second glass the immediate signs of alcoholic mania had disappeared.

"Do you feel better now?" David Hyatt asked.

"Yes! yes!" was the slow response. "They've gone—the demons—but they will come back again, soon, unless I have liquor. But let me go—set me free, for I must go in search of my boy—my brave, handsome boy! Set me free, I say, till I search for him."

"How do you mean? Who is your boy—not the young dare-devil who robbed me?"

"He did not rob you! It was not him, but his enemy and my enemy, who was present in

the room to-night. I heard his voice, and then my memory, which has long been clouded, came slowly back. But not until it was too late—not until my precious boy had been sent to destruction, in company with my ward, Kittie. Ha! set me free, I say, until I go in search of them!"

"It will be useless for you to search for them, for it cannot be but what they are drowned long ere this," Hyatt said, sadly. "But, you speak of the girl as your ward. Have you two been traveling together?"

"For about a year. She found me dying in the mountains and nursed me back to life, and since that time we have wandered about together. She was as a daughter to me, and for a year has been searching for a friend whom she had lost all track of. But my boy—my boy! Great God! can it be that, after all these years of my wandering, I have found him only to lose him again? No, no! He still lives, and I *must* find him—I *must* find him, and together we will unite in striking down the infernal villain who has been the cause of my ruin, body and soul! He is in this very camp, for I heard his voice to-night, even though he did not recognize me. Release me, I say, for I must find my boy!"

"Poor fellow!" Hyatt said, pityingly. "Your mind is evidently wandering again. You must remain quiet for the present."

"No, no! I must not. My mind is not wandering, but is now as clear as your own. The memory of the past has at last returned to me, after all these years, and I see plainly my line of duty. I *must* find my boy, for something tells me he is not dead, but is searching for his misguided and Cain-cursed father. For the love of God, do not detain me longer, but let me go!"

"You speak like one who had known better days, sir."

"Ay! sir, I was once comparatively a rich man, but drink conquered me, and was the curse of my life; then something happened that sundered me from those who were dear to me, and I became a wanderer upon the face of the earth."

"But, what assurance have you that the young fellow who was sent down the river is your son?"

"Did he not state that his name was Richard Bristol?"

"I believe he did, although he first called himself Carl Clyde."

"Well, Richard Bristol was the name of the infant son, whom I left in Nebraska years ago, and there can be no doubt but what this young man is my own son. My very heart tells me so, and also that he did not perish in the river to-night."

"I begin to hope that neither the girl nor boy perished, but I fear it is hoping against hope," David Hyatt said, candidly. "I will release you now, if you will accompany me to my home, and accept of some refreshments and better clothing. Then, if you wish to go, you will be at liberty to do so. Will you accompany me?"

"I will, with pleasure."

Accordingly, Byron Bristol was released, and accompanied the mine-owner from the saloon, and to his cabin.

Here Hyatt set out some better liquor than was dispensed at the Daisy, and also some eatables, which Bristol did full justice to, and afterward seemed a good deal refreshed and recuperated.

He was next supplied with an equipment of more suitable attire from Hyatt's own wardrobe, and the change in his appearance was striking.

"Now, then," Hyatt said, seating himself near his new guest. "I want you to answer me a few questions, for they concern me much, and I have become impressed that you can throw some light upon the subject."

"I will gladly give you any information in my power, sir. About what is it you wish to inquire?"

"About the girl, California Kit. Tell me all you know about her."

"That is not very much. As I told you, we ran across each other, about a year ago, and she nursed me over a siege of the 'jams,' and since that time we have roved about, from camp to camp, where the girl has given sparring exhibitions, and I have managed to eke out a living at the monte game."

"Where did the girl acquire the pugilistic art?"

"In Frisco, I believe, at school. She was so clever at using her fists that she ran away from school, in order to search after her former companion, an elderly spinster, who had reared her

from infancy; but, despite all her search, she has never since leaving school been able to get on track of the spinster up to date."

"Indeed! Has she no idea as to what has become of her?"

"No more than that this spinster's life, for years past, has been devoted to searching for a person who had disappeared years ago, and become lost to the identification of those who had formerly known him."

"Hal! This person's name?"

"That I do not know, more than that he is the father of the girl, California Kit."

David Hyatt sprung to his feet, greatly excited.

"By Heaven! I have not been in error then, after all, for the impression that came upon me after those two young people were set adrift, bids fair to become realized. Speak! quick—do you know the name of this spinster, who was formerly California Kit's chaperon?"

"Yes. I never forgot it, after Kit once told me, for it struck me as being an odd one, or at least one not often met with. It was Phyllis Penrose!"

David Hyatt reeled back, as if shot.

"Phyllis Penrose?" he echoed, turning white with pallor. "Then, my God, I too am a sufferer by this accursed night's work, for the girl upon the raft with your son, was my long-lost daughter! Tell me, did you ever see a birthmark on her arm?"

"Ay! I have been shown it many a time. It was a vividly plain crimson crescent!" Byron Bristol replied.

CHAPTER XI. CAGING THE BIRD.

WHEN Paul Potter and Frozen Bill, or Budd Bristol, went up-stairs to the former's room over the Daisy saloon, they held a consultation that lasted nearly an hour, in which time they plotted and counterplotted together, until they had pretty well perfected their villainous plans of operation.

They had every reason to believe they were in a fair way of extorting large sums of money both from David Hyatt and his wife—from the latter, at least, by threats of exposure.

When they came down-stairs David Hyatt had just left the saloon, accompanied by Byron Bristol, and the subject of the incidents of the preceding few minutes was upon every tongue, for the miners as a rule regarded it as exceeding strange that the mine-owner should have taken such an interest in the vagabond.

Therefore, Potter and Budd Bristol were speedily in possession of the full particulars of what had passed, and the latter heard the news of his wronged brother's arrival in the camp with a savage gleam in his eyes.

"Let's get out of here, where we can talk this matter over in safety!" he growled. "Something must be done at once."

"Yes, I should say so!" Potter agreed. "This tramp is no doubt your brother, and he is more than likely the same vag who has been trampin' around the country with California Kit, for she had some such a companion doggin' her around when I heard of her being at Shaefer's Flats."

"Just so. And he may know about the girl's history and blab it to Hyatt, which will knock our plans in the head."

"Of course, your brother must be put out of the way without delay. This is demanded both for your individual and for our mutual interests. But how shall it be worked? Hyatt has got him in tow for the present, and we shall not be able to get at him, I'm afraid."

Budd Bristol did not immediately reply.

They had left the saloon and were walking slowly along through the still warring elements of the drenching night, their footsteps taking them toward the tool-house where Deadwood Dick, Junior, had left the, as he supposed, lifeless body of California Kit.

"I wish I knew if the boy was really drowned," Bristol said, at last. "I've got a sort o' misgiving that he ain't, and will give me a dig in the back when I ain't expectin' it. He's a vengeful young whelp, and ain't none too good to do it."

"Pshaw! You ain't gettin' cowardly, I hope?" Potter growled. "If you are, we might as well throw up the job an' done wi' it."

"No, I'm not gettin' cowardly," the other retorted. "Only 'tain't a very pleasant thing—this not knowing what minute may be your last. Here, let's turn into this tool-house out of the wet."

They did so, and groping about in the dense gloom, soon found seats on some nail-kegs.

"The boy's miles from here, floatin' in the river, I'll guarantee!" Potter allowed; "and the girl, too, without a doubt. It's a cursed unfortunate thing she was not kept off the raft. If I'd been positive as to her identity, I'd 'a' kept her off, too. As it is, our only show is to work the money out o' Henry Hollis on the strength of promises, if we can. I've some doubts about the matter."

"I haven't. He'd be crazy to get some tidings of the kid, and will dough over liberal in advance, or else he won't see the gal," with a dry laugh. "Our lay-out is to work Alecia Anna, first, and make her disgorge, which we can do without doubt. She is fairly in our power, and as she thinks so much of her new husband and his fortune, she won't be apt to

give him up just to save a little sum of his collateral, you bet! You leave her to me, and I'll work what money away from her that's worth working."

"Sh! listen!" Budd Bristol said, warningly.

"What for?"

"I thought I heard a groan!"

"Pooh! It was only the wind. I believe you are getting to be a coward, after all."

"Nonsense. I am sure I heard the moan of a human voice. Listen a few minutes anyhow."

They did so.

Outside the storm still raged around the frail building, but the lightning and thunder had pretty nearly abated.

"Hal! there—did you hear it?" Bristol exclaimed, a moment later. "It was a moan, and there is some one in ther shebang. Hev ye got a match?"

"No."

"Never mind, for I've got one."

He felt around until he found a dry spot, for the shed was leaking badly, and then struck a light.

Then simultaneous cries burst from the lips of the ruffians as they beheld California Kit lying upon a bench, in an apparent state of insensibility, although she showed some signs of recovering consciousness.

"The girl! the girl!" cried Paul Potter.

"True as thunder!" coincided Bristol. "How in the name of common sense did she come to be here, though?"

"No doubt she was rescued by Deadwood Dick, Jr., and brought here, either for dead or to recover consciousness. If such is the case, the young whelp may be back here at any minute, and it's high time we were getting out."

"Hal! who's gettin' cowardly now?" sneered Bristol. "I agree with you, however, that it might not be healthy for us to be found around here. But we must take the gal."

"Certainly! She is a prize too priceless to lose, now that she is in our power."

They groped their way forward until they reached the bench; then raising Kit's limp form between them, they bore her from the tool-house.

Outside, they paused and gazed cautiously about them, but, as well as they could discern, through the darkness, there was no other person in that vicinity, the camp proper being quite a little distance away.

"Where shall we take her?" Bristol demanded. "She must be hidden, for the boy will search for her if it was he who rescued her."

Potter reflected a few minutes.

"There's no safe hiding-place around here, except it is in Dutch Duff's cellar, to which there is a back, outside door. You remain on guard, and don't hesitate to use your pops if any one comes this way. I can bribe Duff to help us out, for a hundred dollars. Have you got that much?"

"I s'pose so. Here it is; but, mind you, I'm to have half we make out o' the girl?"

"Of course. You'll find I'm always square with a pal."

And so saying, the rascal hurried away, chuckling as he went.

On his arrival at the Daisy, he called Dutch Duff to one side, and offered the Teuton the hundred dollars for the use of his cellar for a couple of days. Duff to know nothing what was going on below stairs, and to keep his tongue still from mentioning that the cellar was in use at all.

A bargain was effected, for Duff could not withstand the temptation of fingering the hundred dollars, no matter what his conscientious scruples might have been, and within ten minutes Potter and his pal had carried California Kit into the cellar, where, by the dim light of a lantern, they securely bound her, hand and foot, and also gagged her.

The cellar was a small, dank place, under a rear portion of the saloon building, and no noise the prisoner might make, could reach the ears of the habitués of the barroom.

When they had finished the binding process, the two villains left the cellar, and closed down the outside trap-door, which opened at the rear of the building.

"Our bird is safely caged, now!" Paul Potter said, grimly. "and if we don't bleed Dave Hyatt to a long meter tune, my name is not Potter!"

CHAPTER XII.

TRUE TO THE DEATH.

THE dawning of the next morning saw David Hyatt and Byron Bristol early astir, and prepared to go in search of the victims of their unjust sentence.

The mine-owner had prevailed upon Mr. Bristol that it would be useless to attempt a search during the night, so he had remained at the cabin, and the twain had talked until daybreak, each explaining to the other the peculiarities that had marked his career, in the past.

As soon as it was fairly daybreak, the mine-owner provided two horses, which were mounted, and the anxious pair of parents rode out of the camp and down the stage-trail, in vain hope that they could find some trace of those who had been found, after many years, only to be lost again.

So early was it when they left the camp, that there were few if any persons astir.

The full dawn of day, however, in the camp, brought forth the miners from their respective quarters, and then and there followed a discovery, that threw the camp into a fever of excitement.

When the Daisy Saloon had closed its doors for the night, the body of Big-Mouth Mose had been left lying in under a table in the barroom, as no disposition was to be made of it until the morrow.

Now, however, when the first miner sought the Daisy, to get his first "nip" before breakfast, he was treated to a startling surprise.

Dutch Duff's place had not yet been opened up;

nevertheless, sitting outside the door, and propped up against it, was the corpse of the defunct local bruiser.

His eyes were wide open, and stared glassily into vacancy; the lower jaw had dropped open, and the arms were placed akimbo, giving the corpse a most horrible appearance.

This was not all, however. Mose wore his hair closely clipped, and had a broad high forehead.

Upon his forehead now was a crimson-hued crescent!

It had not been cut into the skin, but appeared rather to have been wrought there by some crescent-shaped stamp, which had left its crimson-hued impression.

The crescent could easily have been covered by a silver dollar.

Nor was this all.

Attached to the corpse's shirt-front was a sheet of note-paper, which contained the following words in a bold, round style of chirography:

"BEHOLD!

"Men of Bummer's Bar, the Sign of the Crimson Crescent, and tremble, for more of ye shall wear this mark, and those who do will realize that it is the advance courier, warning them of their approaching doom. Marked for life are ye who need expect no mercy from DEADWOOD DICK, JR."

As the first man who discovered the body outside the saloon chanced to be one of the jurors who had found Dick guilty, it may naturally be supposed that he felt considerably startled and alarmed.

His name was Flynn, and he had acted as foreman of the jury, hence the discovery of the Sign of the Crimson Crescent apprised him that Dick was still alive, and likely to carry out his threat of vengeance.

Flynn was not a brave man.

Indeed there were few men in the camp who were greater actual cowards than he, or to whom the fear of death had greater terrors.

So, no sooner did he discover the spectacle in front of the Daisy Saloon, and read the warning message of the Avenger, than he began to yell at the top of his voice, to arouse those miners and citizens who lived in the plaza circle.

His efforts in this respect met with speedy success, and the town was soon aroused, and all collected in front of the Daisy Saloon.

"Look! look!" Flynn cried, as one after another came up. "The Crimson Crescent—the sign that Deadwood Dick is not drowned, but is back in the camp."

"Big Mose ain't ther only one as bears the mark," a miner said. "Why, yer forehead is stamped, the same as Mose's is, Flynn!"

"Good God! you do not mean it—you're trying to fool me!" Flynn gasped, quaking with terror, as he felt of his forehead. "I feel nothing!"

"Can't help that!" was the reply. "You're marked, same like Mose. Leave it to the crowd if you ain't."

"Yas, he's marked jest like Mose!" cried a number of voices.

With a howl of horror, Flynn rushed into the saloon, which Dutch Duff, alarmed by the commotion, had just opened.

A glance into the mirror apprised Mr. Flynn that he was indeed marked upon the forehead with the startling sign of the crimson crescent.

Uttering a curse, he rushed from the saloon to the river's edge, and tried to wash off the Avenger's mark, but all to no avail. The vivid stain, if anything, grew even brighter, as he was assured by several miners who had watched the bathing operation.

His terror knowing no bounds, Flynn went back to the saloon, where the greatest excitement and consternation were raging.

The eleven other jurors had, by this time put in an appearance, and upon the forehead of each was the visible and indelible brand of the Crimson Crescent!

Dutch Duff was likewise similarly branded!

All this work had been accomplished between midnight and morning, but how?

Each of the jurors claimed that his respective abode had been securely closed.

How, then, had Deadwood Dick Jr. succeeded in gaining entrance?

It was certainly a mystery of the most baffling description, and all Bummer's Bar was wild with excitement of the most intense character.

When a rigid inquiry was instituted, it was learned that each of the twelve jurors had found his door unfastened in the morning, on rising, and a rear door of the Daisy Saloon was also unlocked; nevertheless, each of the branded men was willing to swear on a stack of Bibles that their respective doors had been fastened when they had retired for the night.

However, as the jurymen, as well as Duff himself, had been drinking hard during the preceding evening, up to the time the saloon closed, there were plenty who stood ready to believe that not one of the lot had fastened their doors on retiring for the night.

However it might be, Deadwood Dick Jr. had evidently got in his work effectually, for thirteen men in Bummer's Bar were evidently marked for life—for all their efforts to remove the crescent brand with the aid of soap and water proved unavailing.

Hence, the rage of the marked men, and the consternation of the other denizens of the camp, was something unprecedented.

As yet, the young Avenger had not struck to kill, but he had warned all that he would do so, and there was no telling what minute he might strike.

Several of the branded men were members of the

local Vigilance Committee, and, as soon as order could be brought out of chaos, a search of the camp was instituted, in hopes of finding the daring junior Richard.

There were two men who did not join in this search, but who looked on with grim silence, except when they consulted between themselves.

They were Budd Bristol and his associate, Paul Potter.

"This is bad business!" Bristol said, "and had we not kept ourselves shady during the night, no doubt we'd have got branded in the same way. The boy is lying around somewhere in hiding, and if we don't look out he will single us out as his first victims."

"The outlook ain't quite so pleasant as it was, I'll admit," Potter growled. "I opine we'd better close up our business as soon as we can, and get out of the place."

"But what can we do before Hollis and Byron Bristol return from their down-the-river search?"

"We can go see his wife. It's our best chance."

"But, if we leave the vicinity of the saloon, the Vigilantes may stumble onto the whereabouts of the girl, or Dutch Duff may betray our secret."

"Not much danger of that, I guess. Duff can be depended upon to hold his tongue, for I have found him out to be more discreet than you would suppose. If we want to work Alecia for any money, now is the very time, while her husband is away."

"Well, maybe you're right, but if the gal gets away, our goose is cooked. Anyhow, steer ahead, and we'll try the job."

Accordingly, Paul Potter led the way toward the Hyatt cabin, and Budd Bristol followed close beside him.

The morning had not far advanced, but there was a stir about the mine-owner's abode, which showed that the occupants were up.

In answer to Potter's rap upon the door, a Chinese man-servant made his appearance.

"Is your mistress in?" Potter asked.

"Missee in de parlor," John assented, with a grin. Without ceremony, Potter pushed the servant aside and entered, followed by Bristol.

As once before mentioned, the mine-owner's abode is one of the largest in the camp.

The front door opened into a hallway extending rough to the rear.

On one side, to the left, was the comfortably-furnished parlor, off which was a spare bedroom, Hyatt often invited strangers in the camp to partake of his hospitality.

Across the hall was a living-room, with a bedroom opening off of it, while in the rear, at the end of the hall, was a frame shed used for kitchen purposes.

Potter knew which was the parlor, and opening the door, he pushed Bristol in ahead of him, then entering himself, closed the door behind him.

Mrs. Hyatt was seated near a window, attired in a pretty morning wrapper, and engaged in reading. She quickly arose, however, with paling countenance, as the two villains entered.

"Sir!" she cried, "what is the meaning of this intrusion?"

"It means!" Potter replied, coolly, "that if you attempt to raise a noise, I'll blow your brains out. We are here on business, and took the opportunity to call, when your beloved David was away, and no one was in the immediate vicinity. Sit down, Alecia!"

Mrs. Hyatt did not obey. She drew her figure haughtily erect, and gazed at the conspirators defiantly.

"What do you want?" was her stern demand.

"Money!" Potter said, significantly. "Do you know this man, Alecia?"

"I do not. I bid you both leave my presence, or I will scream for help."

"Do not try it, if you value your life for, as sure as you do, I'll blow your brains out. I am not to be trifled with, to-day, nor is my companion. We are here on the make, and intend to win. You say you do not know this man, but I know you do. Do you not remember your first husband, Budd Bristol, alias Joe Ferris? Ah! I see by your start that you do. Well, this man is your first husband, and has the papers to prove it. I also married you, years ago, and I too have the essential document to prove it. And, now, you are, without ever being divorced, married to Hyatt, alias Henry Hollis, whose child your first husband stole, and you and he kept secreted, until you separated, when you put the child in the poor-house. Quite a string of coincidences, eh?"

Mrs. Hyatt grew as white as death, and with a gasp sunk back upon her chair.

"It is false!" she gasped—"it is utterly false."

"Nonsense!" Potter interrupted. "You are guilty of bigamy, twice over, and we can prove it. And, now, if you want to save yourself, we have come to give you a chance. We must get out of this camp, in double quick order, but we don't propose to go without money."

"Nary the time!" coincided Budd Bristol. "You've led a crooked life, Alecia, but we're both willin' to forgive ye, an' let Hollis hev you, ef you come down with a bundle of decent size. Ef ye don't, we shall expose your hull career to Hank Hollis, an' he'll give you the grand shake."

"Yes, an' we won't only do that," added Potter, "but we'll produce the gal you stole from him, and the proofs that ye put it in the poor-house! There! now. Ye might as well come to time, fer we've got the dead wood on you, and there ain't no salvation fer ye, but to pony up!"

Mrs. Hyatt's face had lost none of its pallor, but the gleam in her eyes told that she was not disposed to be browbeaten by the pair of arrant knaves who now stood before her.

"You have come here on a fool's errand, if you expected to frighten money out of me!" she said, coldly. "I have not a dollar in money in my possession, and if I had, you would not get it."

"Henry Hollis has money concealed somewhere, and you know where it is!" Potter growled.

"He may have a million, for all my knowing where it is, sir."

"Bah! That won't work on us. You ain't that sort of a woman, Alecia, to not find where the money is. Why, you used to even go through my pocket, when I slept, to see how much money I had, an' et don't stand to reason you don't know where your hubby has got his boodle stored. Come, now—don't try to play off on us, for it won't pay you."

"I tell you, sir, I know nothing about where my husband keeps his money, and if I did, I'd not confide the secret to a pair of wretches like you."

"Wretches, eh?"

"Yes, wretches—villainous wretches!"

"So you will risk exposure rather than pay us for keeping your secret?"

"Ay! a hundred times!"

"Humph! I thought you told me you loved your Davy?"

"I love my husband, but not even to save being turned out upon the world would I dishonor myself by doing a wrong act against him."

"You're gettin' deuced conscientious, it strikes me. I demand Hank Hollis's money! D'ye hear, I demand it!"

"It matters not! You'll not get a penny of it!"

"You defy me, curse you!"

"Ay! I defy you both!"

"Then, curses seize you, die!" Potter cried, thoroughly infuriated, and at the same instant, raising his revolver, he fired at Mrs. Hyatt's heart.

She gave a shriek, staggered forward, and seized Potter firmly by both arms; then she tottered and fell, dragging him with her to the floor.

At the same instant a man's figure leaped from the bedroom adjoining the parlor, with a vengeful shout.

It was Deadwood Dick Junior.

In either hand he clutched a cocked six-shooter.

Budd Bristol saw him, and, with lightning quickness made a bound, and dashed through the window nearest at hand, carrying sash and all with him.

Paul Potter struggled to free himself, but without avail.

The death-grip of his victim could not be broken, and he was held down, while Deadwood Dick Jr. stood threateningly over him like an avenging Nemesis!

CHAPTER XIII.

THE VOW FULFILLED!

"MERCY! mercy!" Paul Potter begged, as he tried to loosen himself from the death-grip of the dying woman. "For God's sake, spare me, young man!"

For he saw at a glance that Deadwood Dick Junior had taken deliberate aim at him.

"You beg for mercy!" Dick demanded, contemptuously. "You beg for mercy, you inhuman wretch? Bah! Did you show me mercy when you sent me and California Kit down Reese river?"

"No! no! I did not, but I was in liquor then, and knew not what I was doing!"

"Indeed! I suppose you will say you did not know what you were doing when you murdered this woman?"

"Mercy, sir; I beg! I beg! It was under great provocation that I shot her—"

"Because she would not become a traitor to the man who believes her his lawful wife. Oh! I understand the whole story, Paul Potter, and know that the man who leaped from the window was my most hated enemy. He thinks to escape me, but he will not. My vengeance will as surely overtake him as the sun shines by day. As for you, you are one of those who would have consigned me to a watery grave, and you shall not escape me!"

"Mercy! mercy! Spare me, young man, and I will be your devoted slave for life. I will tell you where California Kit is concealed, and—"

"Bah! Do you suppose I do not know where she is? You are a fool, as well as a craven. I knew when you placed her in Dutch Duff's cellar. Before that I overheard all you told Budd Bristol in the Daisy Saloon bar-room. So you see I know Kit's identity."

"You are not the only one, on whom I intend to visit vengeance. So, as I have no time to spare, say your prayers, if you have any to say, for you need expect no mercy. When I leave you, you will be the second man in Bummer's Bar who bears the sign of the Crimson Crescent!"

"Mercy! oh! have mercy!"

"You had no mercy. One!"

Potter groaned aloud, and writhed and twisted in a vain attempt to break loose.

"Two!"

By an almost superhuman effort the wretch succeeded in freeing himself from the death-grip, and leaped to his feet, with a bitter curse.

"Three!" counted Dick; then there was a flash, a sharp report, and Potter threw up his hands with a wild yell, and fell backward, dead.

The young Avenger bent over him without an expression of regret at the awful deed.

Restoring his weapons to his belt, he then drew two articles from his pocket.

One was a piece of sponge—the other a sort of hand stamp, crescent shaped upon the face, and carved out of wood.

Passing the sponge over the face of the stamp, the Avenger then pressed the stamp firmly to the forehead of the ruffian.

When he removed it, the sign of the Crimson Crescent was plainly branded upon the skin.

Restoring the articles to his pocket, Dick next coolly sat down at a table and wrote the following upon a sheet:—

"This man, Paul Potter, the undivorced husband of Mrs. Hyatt, tried in company with Frozen Bill, alias Budd Bristol, to force Mrs. Hyatt to give up David Hyatt's money. She refused, and Potter murdered her. But, he immediately afterward met his death at the hands of

"DEADWOOD DICK JR."

This the young Avenger placed upon Potter's now lifeless remains; then, turning away he leaped out of the window through which Budd Bristol had plunged, and was gone.

David Hyatt and Byron Bristol did not return from their fruitless search, until near noon. They proceeded at once to the mine-owner's cabin, where they made the discovery of the two dead bodies, in the parlor, the servant being nowhere about the premises.

At first, Mr. Hyatt—or, Henry Hollis, as we shall hereafter call him—was nearly beside himself with grief, but when he read Deadwood Dick's message, and considered how he had been deceived, his grief became somewhat assuaged.

The excitement of that day, in Bummer's Bar, beggars description, for when news got abroad of the double tragedy at the cabin, the rough denizens of the camp grew fairly wild both with excitement and consternation.

Reward cards were posted along the approaches to the camp, offering extraordinary sums for the capture of Deadwood Dick Jr., but Henry Hollis took no part in contributing to the fund, which the miners were making up.

He had strong hopes, that through Dick, he would yet get tidings of California Kit, and he considered that Dick had also done a service in killing the wretch, Paul Potter.

As may be supposed, Byron Bristol was overjoyed to learn that Dick was still alive.

The miners, however, were bitter in their denunciation of the young man, and most especially so those who had been branded with the Crimson Crescent, and had been warned that they were doomed.

The taking off of Paul Potter but increased their consternation.

Dutch Duff, in particular, was wild with terror.

"Mein Gott, pövs, ve shall all be murdered py dis veller vot stamp us on der foreheadts!" he groaned, as he endeavored to brace himself up by frequent swigs from his private bottle. "Ve all go deadt, und dem ve go—vere der tyfel ve go, anyhow? Oh! how I wish I was pack in Yermany, vere der vas no Deadwood Dicks, nor none off dis murderin' pizness!"

And, it is safe to say that those who listened to the Teuton's bewailings, wished themselves in some similar place.

All day long the excitement waged hot and strong, and scouting parties searched high and low for Deadwood Dick, the junior; but no trace of him was to be found. When night came on the search was discontinued, and a motley crowd congregated once more within the Daisy Saloon.

But, Budd Bristol was not among the number. He had not been seen about the camp, since early in the day.

At the mine-owner's cabin, a spirit of gloom prevailed.

The body of Paul Potter had been removed, while that of Mrs. Hollis had been laid out, preparatory for burial, in the parlor.

In the sitting-room, across the hall, Henry Hollis and Byron Bristol kept a silent vigil.

Outside, another storm was raging, even fiercer than on the night preceding, the wind blowing a very gale, and dashing the rain in torrents against the window-panes.

It was during the evening, when it seemed the storm must be at the height of its fury, that there came a rap on the cabin door which brought both men to their feet.

It was a timid knock, such as might have been made by a woman.

"I wonder who it can be?" Hollis said, staring at his companion.

"California Kit, perhaps," Byron Bristol replied.

The hope that it might, indeed, be Kitten caused the mine-owner to hasten to the door, and throw it wide open.

A gust of wind and rain swept into the hall, and with it came a tall, angular woman, with a sharp hard visage, and hair that was thickly threaded with gray, and combed smoothly back.

She was attired in a large figured delaine dress, with a shawl thrown about her shoulders, and wore a flaring poke bonnet, of the ancient style, which was gayly ornamented with rosettes and ribbons.

"Shut the door," she said peremptorily, after entering. "Ugh! it is a terrible night!"

"Who are you?" the mine-owner demanded, after obeying her command and leading the way to the sitting-room, where he handed her a chair.

"You do not recognize me then, Henry Hollis?"

"What! It cannot be possible that you are—"

"Phyllis Penrose, a former nurse in your family, sir, whom you discharged before your daughter was lost."

"True! true! I see the resemblance now. Believe me, Phyllis, I am glad to see you, for I have recently learned of your devotion to the task of trying to find me and restore to me my child."

"I have traveled far and wide, Henry Hollis," the spinster replied soberly, "and it was only recently

that I learned you were here. So I came here last night, but I did not bring your child."

"So I am aware. But by strangest chance my daughter in male attire arrived on the same stage that you did. She had been traveling for over a year past in company with this man, whose name is Byron Bristol. To her discredit she has been engaged in giving sparring exhibitions."

"All of which I have been informed of since my arrival by one who takes a great interest in her—Deadwood Dick, Jr., as he calls himself. And now, Henry Hollis, where is your child? For shame! To what terrible fate did you consign her?"

Henry Hollis buried his face in his hands.

"For God's sake do not mention that," he groaned. "for my regrets are bitter enough. I did not know it was my child; I—"

"Even though you did not, you were a coward and a wretch to consign two innocent children, as it were, to such a fate. The boy escaped and will visit vengeance upon you. I have seen him and learned much from him I did not know before. I suppose you did not know that your murdered wife was the wife of Paul Potter, and that it was she and he who were the kidnappers of your daughter years ago."

"I have learned about their marriage from a note left by Deadwood Dick, but I never had an idea they were concerned in child-stealing. Pray go on and explain."

Phyllis Penrose did so, giving nearly word for word the substance of the interview between Paul Potter and Budd Bristol in the Daisy Saloon, which had been heard by Deadwood Dick, Jr., from outside the window.

In the mean time, while Phyllis was making her narration within the cabin, another scene was taking place outside in the drenching storm.

A man was skulking stealthily toward the Hollis abode. His eyes gleamed like dusky diamonds and his face wore an ugly and villainous expression.

Evidently murder was in his heart, for in one hand he clutched a formidable revolver, which was cocked and ready for use.

His face had been scratched and cut in many places, and he was soaking wet and mud-splashed, presenting altogether a sorry appearance.

The man was Budd Bristol, and his thoughts ran: "I must leave Bummer's Bar before daybreak, and shall have to go without making the haul Potter and I had planned. But, before I go, I will end Byron Bristol's life, at least, so that he will never bother me about the Niobrara property. I can lay for the boy, at a later date!"

A light was burning in the sitting-room of the Hollis cabin, and the curtain was up, so that any person on the outside could look in, without hindrance.

Budd Bristol crept close to the window, and glared in upon the scene, with a chuckle.

"There he is!" he muttered, his burning gaze resting upon Byron Bristol, who sat facing the window. "He is alive, and looking better than a dead man yet, but he shall never live to interfere with my claims on the Niobrara ranch. I'll put a bead in him, now, that will finish his mutter!"

He raised his revolver, and took deliberate aim, but, before he could fire, the weapon was knocked from his grasp, and he was jerked suddenly upon his back. Then, a lithe figure leaped upon his breast, and pinioned him down, while a voice hissed, vengefully:

"Die, murderer of my mother, and would-be murderer of my father!—die like the dog you are, and then Dick Bristol's oath of vengeance will be fulfilled to the letter!"

A gleaming weapon flashed up and down thrice, brought the air, and Budd Bristol with a deep groan expired.

He had paid the bitter penalty of his crimes.

Deadwood Dick, Jr. arose, and strode to the cabin door, upon which he rapped, loudly.

The door was speedily opened by Hollis, and Dick stepped inside, with a revolver in his grasp.

Motioning Henry Hollis to the sitting-room, he followed.

"My son! my son!" cried Byron Bristol, springing to his feet.

"Sit down!" Dick ordered authoritatively, at the same time raising his weapon, menacingly. "You are my father, Byron Bristol, but henceforth I am an outlaw, and can be no son to you! Outside the cabin lies the body of our enemy, Budd Bristol. In killing him, I not only saved your life, but avenged the murder of my dear mother, whom you fled from, years ago. Here, sir, are the documents that will re-establish you at the Niobrara ranch, where you can spend your declining years in peace and comfort."

"As for you, sir!" turning to Henry Hollis, "Phyllis Penrose has probably explained everything, except the fact that your daughter still lives!"

"Thank God!" gasped Hollis.

"You need not," Dick replied, coolly, "for she is far from here, now, and you will never set eyes upon her again. By mutual consent we have linked our fates together, forever, and will be married within the month. You may hunt us if you like, but if you do, beware of the fatal sign of the Crimson Crescent. I swore to be revenged upon you, and this is my revenge. Adieu!"

He turned, left the cabin, and disappeared in the darkness.

Neither Deadwood Dick, Jr., nor California Kit were ever again seen at Bummer's Bar.

Desperate over the loss of his child, Henry Hollis soon disposed of his interests in the camp, and set out in quest of her and her young lover, swearing dire vengeance upon the latter.

And, organized into an avenging band, the twelve branded jurymen accompanied him.

Nearly heartbroken, Byron Bristol went back to the Niobrara ranch, taking Phyllis Penrose with him to act as housekeeper.

Of the others of our narrative, nothing remains to add, except that Dutch Duff eventually returned to Germany, where, with his branded forehead, he is no doubt an object of great curiosity.

THE END.

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